PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 86

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1985-86

COMPRISING PERIOD
6 NOVEMBER—15 NOVEMBER 1985

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES commenced with the year 1803, and the contents are set forth in the following Chronological Table:—

HISTORY

CONQUEST TO 34 GEO. II.—1066 to 1760

Vol. 1 to 15. 1 Will. I to 34 Geo. II

1066-1760

REIGN OF GEO. III.—1760 to 1820

Vol. 15 to 35. Geo. III to 40 Geo. III.

1760—1800

PARLIAMENTS OF UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

(FIRST PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	35	41 GEO. III.	1801
—	36	42 —	1802

(SECOND PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	36	42 GEO. III.	1802-3

DEBATES

First Series

(SECOND PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)

Vol.	1 & 2	44 GEO. III.	1803-4
—	3 to 5	45 —	1805
—	6 & 7	46 —	1806

(THIRD PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	8 & 9	47 GEO. III.	1806-7

(FOURTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	9 to 11	48 GEO. III.	1807-8
—	12—14	49 —	1809
—	15—17	50 —	1810
—	18—20	51 —	1810-11
—	21—23	52 —	1812

(FIFTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	24 to 26	53 GEO. III.	1812-13
—	27 & 28	54 —	1813-14
—	29 to 31	55 —	1814-15
—	32—34	56 —	1816
—	35 & 36	58 —	1817
—	37—38	58 —	1818

(SIXTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	39 & 40	59 GEO III.	1819
—	41	60 —	1819-20

Second Series

REIGN OF GEO. IV.—1820 to 1830

(SEVENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	1 to 3	1 GEO. IV.	1820
—	4 & 5	2 —	1821
—	6— 7	3 —	1822
—	8— 9	4 —	1823
—	10—11	5 —	1824
—	12—13	6 —	1825-6
—	14—15	7 —	1826

(EIGHTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	16	7 GEO. IV.	1826
—	17	8 —	1827
—	18 & 19	9 —	1828
—	20—21	10 —	1829
—	22 to 25	11 —	1830

Third Series

REIGN OF WILLIAM IV.—1830 to 1837

(NINTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	1 to 3	1 WILL. IV.	1830-1

(TENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	4 to 8	2 WILL. IV.	1831
—	9—14	3 —	1832

(ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	15 to 20	4 WILL. IV.	1833
—	21—25	5 —	1834

(TWELFTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	26 to 30	6 WILL. IV.	1835
—	31—35	7 —	1836
—	36—38	8 —	1837

REIGN OF VICTORIA.—1837 to 1901

(THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	39 to 44	1 VICTORIA	1838
—	45—50	2 —	1839
—	51—55	3 —	1840
—	56—58	4 —	(a)1841

(FOURTEENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	59	4 VICTORIA	(b)1841
—	60 to 65	5 —	1842
—	66—71	6 —	1843
—	72—76	7 —	1844
—	77—82	8 —	1845
—	83—88	9 —	1846
—	89—94	10 —	(a)1847

(FIFTEENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	95	10 VICTORIA	(b)1847
—	96—101	11 —	1848
—	102—107	12 —	1849
—	108—113	13 —	1850
—	114—118	14 —	1851
—	119—122	15 —	(a)1852

(SIXTEENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	123	15 VICTORIA	(b)1852
—	124 to 129	16 —	1853
—	130—135	17 —	1854
—	136—139	18 —	1855
—	140—143	19 —	1856
—	144	20 —	(a)1857

(SEVENTEENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	145 to 147	20 VICTORIA	(b)1857
—	148—151	21 —	1858
—	152 & 153	22 —	(a)1859

(EIGHTEENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	154 & 155	22 VICTORIA	(b)1859
—	156 to 160	23 —	1860
—	161—164	24 —	1861
—	165—168	25 —	1862
—	169—172	26 —	1863
—	173—176	27 —	1864
—	177—180	28 —	1865

(NINETEENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	181 to 184	29 VICTORIA	1866
—	185—189	30 —	1867
—	190—193	31 —	1867-8

(TWENTIETH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	194 to 198	32 VICTORIA	1868-9
—	199—203	33 —	1870
—	204—208	34 —	1871
—	209—213	35 —	1872
—	214—217	36 —	1873

(TWENTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	218 to 221	37 VICTORIA	1874
—	222—226	38 —	1875
—	227—231	39 —	1876
—	232—236	40 —	1877
—	237—243	41 —	1878
—	242—249	42 —	1878-9
—	250 & 251	43 —	(a)1880

(TWENTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	252 to 256	43 VICTORIA	(b)1880
—	257—265	44 —	1881
—	266—273	45 —	(a)1882
—	274 & 275	45 —	(b)1882
—	276 to 283	46 —	1883
—	284—292	47 —	1884
—	293—301	48 —	1884-5

(TWENTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	302 to 307	49 VICTORIA	1886

(TWENTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	308 & 309	49 VICTORIA	(b)1886
—	310 to 321	50 —	1887
—	322—332	51 —	1888
—	333—340	52 —	1889
—	341—348	53 —	1890
—	349—356	54 —	1890-1

Fourth Series

(TWENTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)

Vol.	1 to 6	55 VICTORIA	1892

(TWENTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	7	56 VICTORIA	1892
—	8 to 21	57 —	1893-4
—	22—29	57 —	1894
—	30—35	58 —	1895

(TWENTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	36	59 VICTORIA	1895
—	37 to 44	59 —	1895-6
—	45—52	60 —	1897
—	53—65	61 —	1898
—	66—76	62 —	1899
—	77	63 —	1899
—	78—83	63 —	1900
—	84	63 & 64 —	1900
—	85—87	64 —	1900

(TWENTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	88	65 VICTORIA	1900

REIGN OF EDWARD VII.—1901 to 1910

(TWENTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)

Vol.	89	1 EDWARD VII.	1901
—	90 to 100	1 —	1901
—	101	1 & 2 —	1902
—	102—117	2 —	1902
—	118—128	3 —	1903
—	129—140	4 —	1904
—	141—151	5 —	1905

(TWENTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	152 to 168	6 EDWARD VII.	1906
—	169—182	7 —	1907
—	183—199	8 —	1908

Fifth Series—Official Report

Lords Debates

(TWENTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)

Vol.	1 to 4	9 EDWARD VII.	1909

(TWENTY-NINTH PAPLIAMENT)

Vol.	5 & 6	10 EDWARD VII. and 1 GEO. V.	1910

Commons Debates

(TWENTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)

Vol.	1 to 13	9 EDWARD VII.	1909

(TWENTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	14 to 20	10 EDWARD VII. and 1 GEO. V.	1910

REIGN OF GEORGE V.—1910 to 1936

Lords Debates

(THIRTIETH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	7 to 10	1 & 2 GEO. V.	1911
—	11—13	2—3 —	1912-13
—	14	3—4 —	1913
—	15—17	4—5 —	1914
—	18—20	5—6 —	1914-16
—	21—23	6—7 —	1916
—	24—28	7—8 —	1917
—	29—32	8—9 —	1918

Commons Debates

(THIRTIETH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	21 to 33	1 & 2 GEO. V.	1911
—	34—49	2—3 —	1912
—	50—57	3—4 —	1913
—	58—67	4—5 —	1914
—	68—79	5—6 —	1914-16
—	80—88	6—7 —	1916
—	89—102	7—8 —	1917
—	103—111	8—9 —	1918

(THIRTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	33 to 38	9 & 10 GEO. V.	1919
—	39—43	10—11 —	1920
—	44—47	11—12 —	1921
—	48 (2nd Session)	12 —	1921
—	49—51	12—13 —	1922

(THIRTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	52 to 55	13 & 14 GEO. V.	1922-23

(THIRTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	56 to 59	14 & 15 GEO. V.	1924

(THIRTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	112 to 124	9 & 10 GEO. V.	1919
—	125—140	10—11 —	1920-21
—	141—148	11—12 —	1921
—	149 (2nd Session)	12 —	1921
—	150—158	12—13 —	1922

(THIRTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	159 to 168	13 & 14 GEO. V.	1922-23

(THIRTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	169 to 178	14 & 15 GEO. V.	1924

PARLIAMENT OF UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

(THIRTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	60 to 62	15 & 16 GEO. V.	1924-25
—	63—65	16—17 —	1926
—	66—69	17—18 —	1927
—	70 & 71	18—19 —	1928
—	72 to 74	19—29 —	1928-29

(THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	75 to 78	20 & 21 GEO. V.	1929-30
—	79—82	21—22 —	1930-31

(THIRTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	83 to 85	22 & 23 GEO. V.	1931-32
—	86—89	23—24 —	1932-33
—	90—94	24—25 —	1933-34
—	95—98	25—26 —	1934-35

(THIRTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	99	26 GEO. V. and EDWARD VIII.	1935-36

(THIRTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	179 to 190	15 & 16 GEO. V.	1924-25
—	191—201	16—17 —	1926
—	202—212	17—18 —	1927
—	213—221	18—19 —	1928
—	222—228	19—20 —	1928-29

(THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	229 to 243	20 & 21 GEO. V.	1929-30
—	244—258	21—22 —	1930-31

(THIRTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	259 to 271	22 & 23 GEO. V.	1931-32
—	272—282	23—24 —	1932-33
—	283—294	24—25 —	1933-34
—	295—306	25—26 —	1934-35

(THIRTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	307	26 GEO. V.	1935-36

REIGN OF EDWARD VIII.—1936

Lords Debates

(THIRTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)

Vol.	99 to 102	EDWARD VIII.	1936
—	103	—	1936-37

Commons Debates

(THIRTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)

Vol.	308 to 316	EDWARD VIII.	1936
—	317	—	1936-37

REIGN OF GEORGE VI.—1936 to 1952

Lords Debates

(THIRTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)

Vol.	104 to 106	1 GEO. VI.	1936-37
—	107—110	1 & 2 —	1936-38
—	111—114	2—3 —	1938-39
—	115—117	3—4 —	1939-40
—	118—120	4—5 —	1940-41
—	121—124	5—6 —	1941-42
—	125—129	6—7 —	1942-43
—	130—133	7—8 —	1943-44
—	134—136	8—9 —	1944-45

(THIRTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	137 to 143	9 & 10 GEO. VI.	1945-46
—	144—151	10—11 —	1946-47
—	152—158	11—12 —	1947-48
—	159—165	12—14 —	1948-49

(THIRTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	166 to 168	14 GEO. VI.	1950
—	169—173	14 & 15 —	1950-51

(FORTIETH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	174	15 & 16 GEO. VI. and 1 ELIZ. II.	1951-52

Commons Debates

(THIRTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)

Vol.	318 to 327	1 GEO. VI.	1936-37
—	328—340	1 & 2 —	1937-38
—	341—354	2—3 —	1938-39
—	355—366	3—4 —	1939-40
—	367—375	4—5 —	1940-41
—	376—384	5—6 —	1941-42
—	385—394	6—7 —	1942-43
—	395—405	7—8 —	1943-44
—	406—412	8—9 —	1944-45

(THIRTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	413 to 429	9 & 10 GEO. VI.	1945-46
—	430—442	10—11 —	1946-47
—	443—456	11—12 —	1947-48
—	457—471	12—14 —	1948-49

(THIRTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	472 to 479	14 GEO. VI.	1950
—	480—492	14 & 15 —	1950-51

(FORTIETH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	493 to 495	15 & 16 GEO. VI. and 1 ELIZ. II.	1951-52

REIGN OF ELIZABETH II.—1952 to

Lords Debates

(FORTIETH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)

Vol.	174 to 178	1 ELIZ. II.	1952
—	179—183	1 & 2 —	1952-53
—	184—189	2—3 —	1953-54
—	190—192	3—4 —	1954-55

(FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	193 to 199	4 & 5 ELIZ. II	1955-56
—	200—205	5—6 —	1956-57
—	206—211	6—7 —	1957-58
—	212—218	7—8 —	1958-59

(FORTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	219 to 225	8 & 9 ELIZ. II.	1959-60
—	226—234	9—10 —	1960-61
—	235—243	10—11 —	1961-62
—	244—252	11—12 —	1962-63
—	253—260	12—13 —	1963-64

(FORTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	261 to 269	13 & 14 ELIZ. II.	1964-65
—	270—273	14—15 —	1965-66

(FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	274 to 285	15 & 16 ELIZ. II.	1966-67
—	286—296	16—17 —	1967-68
—	297—304	17—18 —	1968-69
—	305—310	18—19 —	1969-70

(FORTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	311 to 324	19 & 20 ELIZ. II.	1970-71
—	325—335	20—21 —	1971-72
—	336—345	21—22 —	1972-73
—	346—349	22—23 —	1973-74

(FORTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	350 to 353	23 ELIZ. II.	1974

(FORTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	354 to 365	23 & 24 ELIZ. II.	1974-75
—	366—377	24—25 —	1975-76
—	378—386	25—26 —	1976-77
—	387—395	26—27 —	1977-78
—	396—399	27—28 —	1978-79

(FORTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	400 to 414	28 & 29 ELIZ. II.	1979-80
—	415 to 424	29 & 30 ELIZ. II.	1980-81
—	425 to 435	30 & 31 ELIZ. II.	1981-82
—	436 to 442	31 & 32 ELIZ. II.	1982-83

(FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	443 to 456	32 & 33 ELIZ. II.	1983-84
Vol.	457 to 467	33 & 34 ELIZ. II.	1984-85

Commons Debates

(FORTIETH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)

Vol.	495 to 506	1 ELIZ. II.	1952
—	507—519	1 & 2 —	1952-53
—	520—534	2—3 —	1953-54
—	535—541	3—4 —	1954-55

(FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	542 to 559	4 & 5 ELIZ. II.	1955-56
—	560—576	5—6 —	1956-57
—	577—593	6—7 —	1957-58
—	594—611	7—8 —	1958-59

(FORTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	612 to 628	8 & 9 ELIZ. II.	1959-60
—	629—647	9—10 —	1960-61
—	648—665	10—11 —	1961-62
—	666—683	11—12 —	1962-63
—	684—700	12—13 —	1963-64

(FORTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	701 to 719	13 & 14 ELIZ. II.	1964-65
—	720—726	14—15 —	1965-66

(FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	727 to 752	15 & 16 ELIZ. II.	1966-67
—	753—769	16—17 —	1967-68
—	770—789	17—18 —	1968-69
—	790—802	18—19 —	1969-70

(FORTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	803 to 824	19 & 20 ELIZ. II.	1970-71
—	825—844	20—21 —	1971-72
—	845—862	21—22 —	1972-73
—	863—869	22—23 —	1973-74

(FORTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	870 to 879	23 ELIZ. II.	1974

(FORTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	880 to 900	23 & 24 ELIZ. II.	1974-75
—	901—920	24—25 —	1975-76
—	921—937	25—26 —	1976-77
—	938—956	26—27 —	1977-78
—	957—966	27—28 —	1978-79

(FORTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	967 to 993	28 & 29 ELIZ. II.	1979-80
—	994 to 1000	29 & 30 ELIZ. II.	1980-81

Sixth Series

Vol.	1 to 12	30 ELIZ. II.	1980-81
—	13 to 30	30 & 31 ELIZ. II.	1981-82
—	31 to 43	31 & 32 ELIZ. II.	1982-83

(FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	44 to 66	32 & 33 ELIZ. II.	1983-84
Vol.	67 to 85	33 & 34 ELIZ. II.	1984-85

House of Commons

Alphabetical List of Members

[Returned at the General Election, 9 June 1983]

A

Abse, Leopold (Torfaen)
Adams, Allen (Paisley, North)
Adams, Gerard (Belfast, West)
Adley, Robert James (Christchurch)
Aitken, Jonathan William Patrick (South Thanet)
Alexander, Richard Thain (Newark)
Alison, Rt. Hon. Michael James Hugh (Selby)
Alton, David Patrick (Liverpool, Mossley Hill)
Amery, Rt. Hon. Harold Julian (Brighton, Pavilion)
Amess, David Anthony Andrew (Basildon)
Ancram, Michael (Edinburgh South)
Anderson, Donald (Swansea, East)
Archer, Rt. Hon. Peter Kingsley, QC (Warley, West)
Armstrong, Rt. Hon. Ernest (North-West Durham)
Arnold, Thomas Richard (Hazel Grove)
Ashby, David Glynn (North-West Leicestershire)
Ashdown, Jeremy John Durham (Yeovil)
Ashley, Rt. Hon. Jack, CH (Stoke-on-Trent South)
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Aspinwall, Jack Heywood (Wansdyke)
Atkins, Rt. Hon. Humphrey Edward (Spelthorne)
Atkins, Robert James (South Ribble)
Atkinson, David Anthony (Bournemouth, East)
Atkinson, Norman (Tottenham)

B

Bagier, Gordon Alexander Thomas (Sunderland, South)
Baker, Rt. Hon. Kenneth Wilfred (Mole Valley)
Baker, Nicholas Brian (North Dorset)
Baldry, Anthony Brian (Banbury)
Banks, Robert George (Harrogate)
Banks, Tony (Newham, North-West)
Barnett, Nicolas Guy (Greenwich)
Barron, Kevin John (Rother Valley)
Batiste, Spencer Lee (Elmet)
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony Michael (Birmingham, Selly Oak)
Beckett, Mrs. Margaret Mary (Derby, South)
Beggs, Roy (East Antrim)
Beith, Alan James (Berwick-upon-Tweed)
Bell, Stuart (Middlesbrough)
Bellingham, Henry Campbell (North-West Norfolk)
Bendall, Vivian Walter Hough (Ilford, North)
Benn, Rt. Hon. Anthony Wedgwood (Chesterfield) [*By-election, March 1984*]
Bennett, Andrew Francis (Denton and Reddish)
Bennett, Rt. Hon. Sir Frederic Mackarness (Torbay)
Benyon, William Richard (Milton Keynes)
Bermingham, Gerald Edward (St. Helens South)
Berry, Sir Anthony George (Enfield, Southgate) [*died, October 1984*]
Best, Keith Lander, TD (Ynys Mon)
Bevan, Andrew David Gilroy (Birmingham, Yardley)
Bidwell, Sydney James (Ealing, Southall)
Biffen, Rt. Hon. William John (North Shropshire)
Biggs-Davison, Sir John Alec (Epping Forest)
Blackburn, John Graham (Dudley West)
Blair, Anthony Charles Lynton (Sedgefield)
Blaker, Rt. Hon. Sir Peter Allan Renshaw (Blackpool, South)
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Boscawen, Robert Thomas, MC (Somerton and Frome)
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Bottomley, Mrs. Virginia, Surrey (South-West) [*By-election, May 1984*]
Bowden, Andrew, MBE (Brighton, Kemptown)
Bowden, Gerald Francis (Dulwich)
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Braine, Rt. Hon. Sir Bernard Richard (Castle Point)
Brandon-Bravo, Martin Maurice (Nottingham, South)
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Bright, Graham Frank James (Luton, South)
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Bruinvels, Peter Nigel Edward (Leicester, East)
Bryan, Sir Paul Elmore Oliver, DSO, MC (Boothferry)
Buchan, Norman Findley (Paisley, South)
Buchanan-Smith, Rt. Hon. Alick Laidlaw (Kincardine and Deeside)
Buck, Philip Antony Fyson, QC (Colchester, North)
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Bulmer, James Esmond (Wyre Forest)
Burt, Alistair James Hendrie (Bury, North)
Butcher, John Patrick (Coventry, South-West)
Butterfill, John Valentine (Bournemouth, West)
Butler, Rt. Hon. Adam Courtauld (Bosworth)

C

Caborn, Richard George (Sheffield, Central)
Callaghan, James (Heywood and Middleton)
Callaghan, Rt. Hon. Leonard James (Cardiff South and Penarth)
Campbell, Ian (Dumbarton)
Campbell-Savours, Dale Norman (Workington)
Canavan, Dennis Andrew (Falkirk, West)
Carlile, Alexander Charles (Montgomery)
Carlisle, John Russell (North Luton)
Carlisle, Kenneth Melville (Lincoln)
Carlisle, Rt. Hon. Mark, QC (Warrington, South)
Carter-Jones, Lewis (Eccles)
Carttiss, Michael Reginald Harry (Great Yarmouth)
Cartwright, John Cameron (Woolwich)
Cash, Mr. William (Stafford) [*By-election, May 1984*]
Chalker, Mrs. Lynda (Wallasey)

Channon, Rt. Hon. Henry Paul Guinness (Southend, West)
Chapman, Sydney Brookes (Chipping Barnet)
Chope Christopher Robert (Southampton, Itchen)
Churchill, Winston Spencer (Davyhulme)
Clark, Alan Kenneth McKenzie (Plymouth, Sutton)
Clark, David George (South Shields)
Clark, Michael (Rochford)
Clark, Sir William Gibson (Croydon, South)
Clarke, Rt. Hon. Kenneth Harry, QC (Rushcliffe)
Clarke, Thomas C.B.E. (Monklands, West)
Clay, Robert Alan (Sunderland, North)
Clegg, Sir Walter (Wyre)
Clwyd, Mrs. Ann (Cynon Valley) [*By-election, May 1984*]
Cockeram, Eric Paul (Ludlow)
Cocks, Rt. Hon. Michael Francis Lovell (Bristol, South)
Cohen, Harry Michael (Leyton)
Coleman, Donald Richard CBE (Neath)
Colvin, Michael Keith Beale (Romsey and Waterside)
Concannon, Rt. Hon. John Dennis (Mansfield)
Conlan, Bernard (Gateshead, East)
Conway, Derek Leslie (Shrewsbury and Atcham)
Cook, Francis (Stockton, North)
Cook, Robert Finlayson (Livingston)
Coombs, Simon Christopher (Swindon)
Cope, John Ambrose (Northavon)
Corbett, Robin (Birmingham, Erdington)
Corbyn, Jeremy Bernard (Islington, North)
Cormack, Patrick Thomas (South Staffordshire)
Corrie, John Alexander (Cunninghame, North)
Couchman, James Randall (Gillingham)
Cowans, Harry Lowes (Tyne Bridge) [*died, October 1985*]
Cox, Thomas Michael (Tooting)
Craigen, James Mark (Glasgow Maryhill)
Cranborne, Viscount Robert Michael Thomas Cecil (South Dorset)
Critchley, Julian Michael Gordon (Aldershot)
Crouch, David Lance (Canterbury)
Crowther, Joseph Stanley (Rotherham)
Cunliffe, Lawrence Francis (Leigh)
Cunningham, John Anderson (Copeland)
Currie, Mrs. Edwina (South Derbyshire)

D

Dalyell, Tam (Linlithgow)
Davies, Rt. Hon. David John Denzil (Llanelli)
Davies, Ronald (Caerphilly)
Davis, Terence Anthony Gordon (Birmingham, Hodge Hill)
Deakins, Eric Petro (Walthamstow)
Dean, Sir Arthur Paul (Woodspring)
Dewar, Donald Campbell (Glasgow, Garscadden)
Dickens, Geoffrey Kenneth (Littleborough and Saddleworth)
Dicks, Terence Patrick (Hayes and Harlington)
Dixon, Donald (Jarrow)
Dobson, Frank Gordon (Holborn and St. Pancras)
Dormand, John Donkin (Easington)
Dorrell, Stephen James (Loughborough)
Douglas, Richard Giles (Dunfermline, West)
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James Alexander (Edinburgh, West)
Dover, Denshore Ronald (Chorley)
Dubs, Alfred (Battersea)
du Cann, Rt. Hon. Sir Edward Dillon Lott (Taunton)
Duffy, Albert Edward Patrick (Sheffield, Attercliffe)
Dunn, Robert John (Dartford)
Dunwoody, Mrs. Gwyneth Patricia (Crewe and Nantwich)
Durant, Robert Anthony Bevis (Reading, West)
Dykes, Hugh John (Harrow, East)

E

Eadie, Alexander, BEM (Midlothian)
Eastham, Kenneth (Manchester, Blackley)
Edwards, Robert (Wolverhampton, South-East)
Edwards, Rt. Hon. Roger Nicholas (Pembroke)
Eggar, Timothy John Crommelin (Enfield, North)
Ellis, Raymond Joseph (North-East Derbyshire)
Emery, Sir Peter Frank Hannibal (Honiton)
Evans, Ioan Lyonel (Cynon Valley) [*died, February 1984*]
Evans, John (St. Helens, North)
Evennett, David Anthony (Erith and Crayford)
Ewing, Harry (Falkirk, East)
Eyre, Sir Reginald Edwin (Birmingham, Hall Green)

F

Fairbairn, Nicholas Hardwick, QC (Perth and Kinross)
Fallon, Michael Cather (Darlington)
Farr, Sir John Arnold (Harborough)
Fatchett, Derek John (Leeds, Central)
Faulds, Andrew Matthew William (Warley, East)
Favell, Anthony Rowland (Stockport)
Fenner, Mrs. Peggy Edith (Medway)
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fields, Terry (Liverpool, Broadgreen)
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey, MBE (Hampstead and Highgate)
Fisher, Mark (Stoke-on-Trent, Central)
Flannery, Martin Henry (Sheffield, Hillsborough)
Fletcher, Alexander Macpherson (Edinburgh, Central)
Fookes, Miss Janet Evelyn (Plymouth, Drake)
Foot, Rt. Hon. Michael Mackintosh (Blaenau Gwent)
Forman, Francis Nigel (Carshalton and Wallington)
Forrester, John Stuart (Stoke-on-Trent, North)
Forsyth, Michael Bruce (Stirling)
Forsythe, Clifford (South Antrim)
Forth, Eric (Mid-Worcestershire)
Foster, Derek (Bishop Auckland)
Foulkes, George (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley)
Fowler, Rt. Hon. Peter Norman (Sutton Coldfield)
Fox, John Marcus, MBE (Shipley)
Franks, Cecil Simon (Barrow and Furness)
Fraser, Rt. Hon. Sir Hugh Charles Patrick Joseph, MBE (Stafford) [*died, March 1984*]
Fraser, John Denis (Norwood)
Fraser, Peter Lovat, QC (Angus, East)
Freeman, Roger Norman (Kettering)
Freeson, Rt. Hon. Reginald (Brent, East)
Freud, Clement Raphael (North-East Cambridgeshire)
Fry, Peter Derek (Wellingborough)

G

Gale, Roger James (North Thanet)
Galley, Roy (Halifax)
Gardiner, George Arthur (Reigate)
Gardner, Sir Edward Lucas, QC (Fylde)
Garel-Jones, William Armand Thomas Tristan (Watford)
Garrett, William Edward (Wallsend)

George, Bruce Thomas (Walsall, South)
Gilbert, Rt. Hon. John William (Dudley, East)
Gilmour, Rt. Hon. Sir Ian Hedworth John Little, Bt. (Chesham and Amersham)
Glyn, Dr. Alan, ERD (Windsor and Maidenhead)
Godman, Norman Anthony (Greenock and Port Glasgow)
Golding, John (Newcastle-under-Lyme)
Goodhart, Sir Philip Carter (Beckenham)
Goodlad, Alastair Robertson (Eddisbury)
Gorst, John Michael (Hendon, North)
Gould, Bryan Charles (Dagenham)
Gourlay, Harry Philip Heggie (Kirkcaldy)
Gow, Ian Reginald Edward, TD (Eastbourne)
Gower, Sir Herbert Raymond (Vale of Glamorgan)
Grant, Sir John Anthony (South West Cambridge)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing, North)
Gregory, Conal Robert (York)
Griffiths, Sir Eldon Wylie (Bury St. Edmunds)
Griffiths, Peter Harry Steve (Portsmouth, North)
Grist, Ian (Cardiff, Central)
Ground, Reginald Patrick, QC (Feltham and Heston)
Grylls, William Michael John (North West Surrey)
Gummer, Rt. Hon. John Selwyn (Suffolk Coastal)

H

Hamilton, Archibald Gavin (Epsom and Ewell)
Hamilton, James, CBE (Motherwell, North)
Hamilton, Mostyn Neil (Tatton)
Hamilton, William Winter (Central Fife)
Hampson, Dr. Keith (Leeds, North-West)
Hancock, Michael (Portsmouth, South) [*By-election, June 1984*]
Hanley, Jeremy James (Richmond and Barnes)
Hannam, John Gordon (Exeter)
Hardy, Peter (Wentworth)
Hargreaves, Joseph Kenneth (Hyndburn)
Harman, Ms. Harriet (Peckham)
Harris, David Anthony (St. Ives)
Harrison, Rt. Hon. Walter (Wakefield)
Hart, Rt. Hon. Dame Judith Constance Mary, DBE (Clydesdale)
Harvey, Roger Lambart (Clwyd, South-West)
Haselhurst, Alan Gordon Barraclough (Saffron Walden)
Hattersley, Rt. Hon. Roy Sydney George (Birmingham, Sparkbrook)
Havers, Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Michael Oldfield, QC (Wimbledon)
Hawkins, Christopher James (High Peak)
Hawkins, Sir Paul Lancelot, TD (South-West Norfolk)
Hawksley, Philip Warren (The Wrekin)
Hayes, Jeremy Joseph James (Harlow)
Hayhoe, Rt. Hon. Bernard John (Brentford and Isleworth)
Haynes, David Francis (Ashfield)
Hayward, Robert Antony (Kingswood)
Healey, Rt. Hon. Denis Winston, CH, MBE (Leeds, East)
Heathcoat-Amory, David Philip (Wells)
Heath, Rt. Hon. Edward Richard George, MBE (Old Bexley and Sidcup)
Heddle, Bentley John (Mid-Staffordshire)
Heffer, Eric Samuel (Liverpool, Walton)
Henderson, James Stewart Barry (North-East Fife)
Heseltine, Rt. Hon. Michael Ray Dibdin (Henley)
Hickmet, Richard Saladin (Glanford and Scunthorpe)
Hicks, Robert Adrian (South-East Cornwall)
Higgins, Rt. Hon. Terence Langley (Worthing)
Hill, Stanley James Allen (Southampton, Test)
Hind, Kenneth Harvard (West Lancashire)
Hirst, Michael, William (Strathkelvin and Bearsden)
Hogg, Douglas Martin (Grantham)
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth)
Holland, Philip Welsby (Gedling)
Holland, Stuart Kingsley (Vauxhall)
Holt James Richard (Langbaurgh)
Home Robertson, John David (East Lothian)
Hooson, Tom Ellis (Brecon and Radnor) [*died, May 1985*]
Hordern, Sir Peter Maudslay (Horsham)
Howard, Michael, QC (Folkestone and Hythe)
Howarth, Alan Thomas (Stratford-on-Avon)
Howarth, James Gerald Douglas (Cannock and Burntwood)
Howe, Rt. Hon. Sir Richard Edward Geoffrey, QC (East Surrey)
Howell, Rt. Hon. David Arthur Russell (Guildford)
Howell, Rt. Hon. Denis Herbert (Birmingham, Small Heath)
Howell, Ralph Frederick (North Norfolk)
Howells, Geraint Wyn (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North)
Hoyle, Eric Douglas Harvey (Warrington, North)
Hubbard-Miles, Peter Charles (Bridgend)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen, North)
Hughes, Royston John (Newport, East)
Hughes, Sean Francis (Knowsley, South)
Hughes, Simon Henry Ward (Southwark and Bermondsey)
Hughes, William Mark (City of Durham)
Hume, John (Foyle)
Hunt, David James Fletcher, MBE (Wirral West)
Hunt, John Leonard (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew Robert Frederick (Basingstoke)
Hurd, Rt. Hon. Douglas Richard, CBE (Witney)

I

Irving, Charles Graham (Cheltenham)

J

Jackson, Robert Victor (Wantage)
Janner, Greville Ewan, QC (Leicester, West)
Jenkin, Rt. Hon. Charles Patrick Fleeming (Wanstead and Woodford)
Jenkins, Rt. Hon. Roy Harris (Glasgow, Hillhead)
Jessel, Toby Francis Henry (Twickenham)
John, Brynmor Thomas (Pontypridd)
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey (Wealden)
Johnston, Sir David Russell (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber)
Jones, Gwilym Hadyn (Cardiff, North)
Jones, Robert Brannock (West Hertfordshire)
Jones, Stephen Barry (Alyn and Deeside)
Jopling, Rt. Hon. Thomas Michael (Westmorland and Lonsdale)
Joseph, Rt. Hon. Sir Keith Sinjohn (Leeds, North-East)

K

Kaufman, Rt. Hon. Gerald Bernard (Manchester, Gorton)
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs. Mary Elaine (Lancaster)
Kennedy, Charles Peter (Ross, Cromarty and Skye)
Kershaw, Sir John Anthony, MC (Stroud)
Key, Simon Robert (Salisbury)
Kilfedder, James Alexander (North Down)

Kilroy-Silk, Robert (Knowsley North)
King, Roger Douglas (Birmingham, Northfield)
King, Rt. Hon. Thomas Jeremy (Bridgwater)
Kinnock, Rt. Hon. Neil Gordon (Islwyn)
Kirkwood, Archibald Johnston (Roxburgh and Berwickshire)
Knight, Gregory (Derby North)
Knight, Dame Joan Christabel Jill, (Birmingham, Edgbaston)
Knowles, Michael (Nottingham, East)
Knox, David Laidlaw (Staffordshire, Moorlands)

L

Lambie, David (Cunninghame, South)
Lamond, James Alexander (Oldham, Central and Royton)
Lamont, Norman Stewart Hughson (Kingston upon Thames)
Lang, Ian Bruce (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale)
Latham, Michael Anthony (Rutland and Melton)
Lawler, Geoffrey John (Bradford, North)
Lawrence, Ivan John, QC (Burton)
Lawson, Rt. Hon. Nigel (Blaby)
Leadbitter, Edward (Hartlepool)
Lee, John Robert Louis (Pendle)
Leigh, Edward Julian Egerton (Gainsborough and Horncastle)
Leighton, Ronald (Newham North-East)
Lennox-Boyd, Mark Alexander (Morecambe and Lunesdale)
Lester, James Theodore (Broxtowe)
Lewis, Sir Kenneth (Stamford and Spalding)
Lewis, Ronald Howard (Carlisle)
Lewis, Terence (Worsley)
Lightbown, David Lincoln (Staffordshire, South-East)
Lilley, Peter Bruce (St. Albans)
Litherland, Robert Kenneth (Manchester, Central)
Livsey, Richard (Brecon and Radnor) [*By-election, July 1985*]
Lloyd, Anthony Joseph (Stretford)
Lloyd Ian Stewart (Havant)
Lloyd, Peter Robert Cable (Fareham)
Lofthouse, Geoffrey (Pontefract and Castleford)
Lord, Michael (Suffolk, Central)
Loyden, Edward (Liverpool, Garston)
Luce, Richard Napier (Shoreham)
Lyell, Nicholas Walter, QC (Mid-Bedfordshire)

M

McCartney, Hugh (Clydebank and Milngavie)
McCrea, Rev. Robert Thomas William (Mid-Ulster)
McCrindle, Robert Arthur (Brentwood and Ongar)
McCurley, Mrs. Anna Anderson (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde)
McCusker, James Harold (Upper Bann)
McDonald, Dr. Oonagh Anne (Thurrock)
Macfarlane, David Neil (Sutton and Cheam)
MacGregor, Rt. Hon. John Roddick Russell, OBE (Norfolk, South)
McGuire, Michael Thomas Francis (Makerfield)
McKay, Allen (Barnsley, West and Penistone)
MacKay, Andrew James (Berkshire, East)
MacKay, John Jackson (Argyll and Bute)
McKelvey, William (Kilmarnock and Loudoun)
MacKenzie, Rt. Hon. James Gregor (Glasgow Rutherglen)
Maclean, David (Penrith and the Border) [*By-election, November 1983*]
Maclennan, Robert Adam Ross (Caithness and Sutherland)
Macmillan, Rt. Hon. Maurice Victor (South West Surrey) [*died, March 1984*]
McNair-Wilson, Patrick Michael Ernest David (New Forest)
McNair-Wilson, Robert Michael Conal (Newbury)
McNamara, Joseph Kevin (Kingston upon Hull, North)
McQuarrie, Albert (Banff and Buchan)
McTaggart, Robert (Glasgow, Central)
McWilliam, John David (Blaydon)
Madden, Maxwell Francis (Bradford, West)
Madel, William David (South West Befordshire)
Maginnis, Ken (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)
Major, John (Huntingdon)
Malins, Humfrey Jonathan (Croydon, North West)
Malone, Gerald (Aberdeen, South)
Maples, John Cradock (Lewisham, West)
Marek, John (Wrexham)
Marland, Paul (West (Gloucestershire))
Marlow, Antony Rivers (Northampton, North)
Marshall, David (Glasgow Shettleston)
Marshall, Robert Michael (Arundel)
Martin, Michael John (Glasgow Springburn)
Mason, Rt. Hon. Roy (Barnsley, Central)
Mates, Michael John (East Hampshire)
Mather, David Carol MacDonell MC (Esher)
Maude, Francis Anthony Aylmer (North Warwickshire)
Mawhinney, Dr. Brian Stanley (Peterborough)
Maxton, John Alston (Glasgow Cathcart)
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robert John (Tiverton)
Mayhew, Patrick Barnabas Burke, QC (Tunbridge Wells)
Maynard, Miss Vera Joan (Sheffield, Brightside)
Meacher, Michael Hugh (Oldham, West)
Meadowcroft, Michael James (Leeds, West)
Mellor, David John (Putney)
Merchant, Piers Rolph Garfield (Newcastle upon Tyne Central)
Meyer, Sir Anthony John Charles Bt. (Clwyd, North West)
Michie, William (Sheffield, Heeley)
Mikardo, Ian (Bow and Poplar)
Millan, Rt. Hon. Bruce (Glasgow Govan)
Miller, Hilary Duppa (Bromsgrove)
Miller, Dr Maurice Solomon (East Kilbride)
Mills, Iain Campbell (Meriden)
Mills, Sir Peter McLay (Torridge and West Devon)
Miscampbell, Norman Alexander, QC (Blackpool, North)
Mitchell, Austin Vernon (Great Grimsby)
Mitchell, David Bower (North West Hampshire)
Moate, Roger Denis (Faversham)
Molyneaux, Rt. Hon. James Henry (Lagan Valley)
Monro, Sir Hector Seymour Peter (Dumfries)
Montgomery, Sir William Fergus (Altrincham and Sale)
Moore, John Edward Michael (Croydon, Central)
Morris, Rt. Hon. Alfred (Manchester, Wythenshawe)
Morris, Rt. Hon. John, QC (Aberavon)
Morris, Michael Wolfgang Laurence (Northampton, South)
Morrison, Hon. Charles Andrew (Devizes)
Morrison, Hon. Peter Hugh (City of Chester)

Moynihan, Hon. Colin Berkeley (Lewisham, East)
Mudd, William David (Falmouth and Camborne)
Murphy, Christopher Philip Yorke (Welwyn, Hatfield)

N

Neale, Gerrard Anthony (North Cornwall)
Needham, Richard Francis (North Wiltshire)
Nellist, David John (Coventry, South-East)
Nelson, Richard Anthony (Chichester)
Neubert, Michael Jon (Romford)
Newton, Antony Harold, OBE (Braintree)
Nicholls, Patrick Charles Martyn (Teignbridge)
Nicholson, James (Newry and Armagh)
Normanton, Tom, TD (Cheadle)
Norris, Steven John (Oxford, East)

O

Oakes, Rt. Hon. Gordon James (Halton)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Neill, Martin John (Clackmannan)
Onslow, Cranley Gordon Douglas (Woking)
Oppenheim, Philip Anthony Charles Lawrence (Amber Valley)
Oppenheim, Rt. Hon. Mrs. Sally (Gloucester)
Orme, Rt. Hon. Stanley (Salford, East)
Osborn, John Holbrook (Sheffield, Hallam)
Ottaway, Richard Geoffrey James (Nottingham, North)
Owen, Dr. The Rt. Hon. David Anthony Llewellyn, (Plymouth, Devonport)

P

Page, Sir Arthur John (Harrow, West)
Page, Richard Lewis (South-West Hertfordshire)
Paisley, Rev. Ian Richard Kyle (Antrim, North)
Park, George Maclean (Coventry, North-East)
Parkinson, Rt. Hon. Cecil Edward (Hertsmere)
Parris, Matthew Francis (West Derbyshire)
Parry, Robert (Liverpool, Riverside)
Patchett, Terry (Barnsley, East)
Patten, Christopher Francis (Bath)
Patten, John Haggitt Charles (Oxford West and Abingdon)
Pattie, Geoffrey Edwin (Chertsey and Walton)
Pavitt, Laurence Anstice (Brent, South)
Pawsey, James Francis (Rugby and Kenilworth)
Peacock, Mrs. Elizabeth Joan (Batley and Spen)
Pendry, Thomas (Stalybridge and Hyde)
Penhaligon, David Charles (Truro)
Percival, Rt. Hon. Sir Walter Ian, QC (Southport)
Pike, Peter Leslie (Burnley)
Pink, Ralph Bonner, CBE, VRD (Portsmouth, South) [*died, May 1984*]
Pollock, Alexander (Moray)
Porter, George Barrington (Wirral, South)
Powell, Rt. Hon. John Enoch, MBE (South Down)
Powell, Raymond (Ogmore)
Powell, William Rhys (Corby)
Powley, John Albert (Norwich, South)
Prentice, Rt. Hon. Reginald Ernest (Daventry)
Prescott, John Leslie (Kingston upon Hull, East)
Price, Sir David Ernest Campbell (Eastleigh)
Prior, Rt. Hon. James Michael Leathes (Waveney)
Proctor, Keith Harvey (Billericay)
Pym, Right Hon. Francis Leslie, MC (South East Cambridgeshire)

R

Radice, Giles Heneage (North Durham)
Raffan, Keith William (Delyn)
Raison, Rt. Hon. Timothy Hugh Francis (Aylesbury)
Randall, Stuart Jeffrey (Kingston upon Hull, West)
Rathbone, John Ranking (Lewes)
Redmond, Martin (Don Valley)
Rees, Rt. Hon. Merlyn (Morley and Leeds, South)
Rees, Peter Wynford Innes, QC (Dover)
Renton, Ronald Timothy (Mid-Sussex)
Rhodes, James Robert Vidal (Cambridge)
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon Meredith (Kensington)
Richardson, Josephine (Barking)
Ridley, Nicholas (Cirencester and Tewkesbury)
Ridsdale, Sir Julian Errington, CBE (Harwich)
Rifkind, Malcolm Leslie (Edinburgh, Pentlands)
Rippon, Rt. Hon. Aubrey Geoffrey Frederick, QC (Hexham)
Roberts, Allan (Bootle)
Roberts, Ernest Alfred Cecil (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington)
Roberts, Jeuan Wyn Pritchard (Conwy)
Robertson, George Islay Macneill (Hamilton)
Robinson, Mark Noel Foster, (Newport, West)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Coventry, North-West)
Robinson, Peter David (Belfast, East)
Roe, Mrs. Marion Audrey (Broxbourne)
Rogers, Allan Ralph (Rhondda)
Rooker, Jeffrey William (Birmingham, Perry Barr)
Ross, Ernest (Dundee, West)
Ross, Stephen Sherlock (Isle of Wight)
Ross, William (Londonderry, East)
Rossi, Sir Hugh Alexander Louis (Hornsey and Wood Green)
Rost, Peter Lewis (Erewash)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid-Kent)
Rowlands, Edward (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney)
Rumbold, Mrs. Angela Claire Rosemary, CBE (Mitcham and Morden)
Ryder, Richard Andrew, OBE (Mid-Norfolk)
Ryman, John (Blyth Valley)

S

Sackville, Thomas Geoffrey (Bolton, West)
Sainsbury, Timothy Alan Davan (Hove)
St. John-Stevas, Rt. Hon. Norman Antony Francis (Chelmsford)
Sayeed, Jonathan (Bristol, East)
Scott, Nicholas Paul MBE (Chelsea)
Sedgemore, Brian Charles John (Hackney, South and Shoreditch)
Shaw, John Giles Dunkerley (Pudsey)
Shaw, Sir Michael Norman (Scarborough)
Sheerman, Barry John (Huddersfield)
Sheldon, Robert Edward (Ashton-under-Lyne)
Shelton, William Jeremy Masefield (Streatham)
Shepherd, Colin Ryley (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard Charles Scrimgeour (Aldridge-Brownhills)
Shersby, Julian Michael (Uxbridge)
Shore, Rt. Hon. Peter David (Bethnal Green and Stepney)
Short, Mrs. Renée (Wolverhampton, North-East)
Short, Clare (Birmingham, Ladywood)
Silkin, Rt. Hon. John Ernest (Lewisham, Deptford)
Silvester, Frederick John (Manchester, Withington)

Sims, Roger Edward (Chislehurst)
Skeet, Trevor Herbert Harry (North Bedfordshire)
Skinner, Dennis Edward (Bolsover)
Smith, Christopher Robert (Islington, South and Finsbury)
Smith, Cyril, MBE (Rochdale)
Smith, Sir Dudley Gordon (Warwick and Leamington)
Smith, Rt. Hon. John (Monklands, East)
Smith, Timothy John (Beaconsfield)
Smyth, Reverend William Martin (Belfast, South)
Snape, Peter Charles (West Bromwich, East)
Soames, Arthur Nicholas Winston (Crawley)
Soley, Clive Stafford (Hammersmith)
Spearing, Nigel John (Newham, South)
Speed, Herbert Keith, RD (Ashford)
Speller, Antony (North Devon)
Spence, John Deane (Ryedale)
Spencer, Derek Harold, QC (Leicester, South)
Spicer, James Wilton (West Dorset)
Spicer, William Michael Hardy (South Worcestershire)
Squire, Robin Clifford (Hornchurch)
Stanbrook, Ivor Robert (Orpington)
Stanley, Rt. Hon. John Paul (Tonbridge and Malling)
Steel, Rt. Hon. David Martin Scott (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale)
Steen, Anthony David (South Hams)
Stern, Michael Charles (Bristol, North-West)
Stevens, Lewis David (Nuneaton)
Stevens, Martin (Fulham)
Stewart, Andrew Struthers (Sherwood)
Stewart, Bernard Harold Ian Halley (North Hertfordshire)
Stewart, Rt. Hon. Donald James (Western Isles)
Stewart, John Allan (Eastwood)
Stokes, John Heydon Romaine (Halesowen and Stourbridge)
Stott, Roger, CBE (Wigan)
Stradling Thomas, Sir John (Monmouth)
Strang, Gavin Steel (Edinburgh, East)
Straw, John Whitaker (Blackburn)
Sumberg, David Anthony Gerald (Bury, South)

T

Tapsell, Sir Peter Hannay Bailey (East Lindsey)
Taylor, Edward Macmillan (Southend, East)
Taylor, Rt. Hon. John David (Strangford)
Taylor, John Mark (Solihull)
Tebbit, Rt. Hon. Norman Beresford (Chingford)
Temple-Morris, Peter (Leominster)
Terlezki, Stefan (Cardif, West)
Thatcher, Rt. Hon. Mrs. Margaret Hilda (Finchley)
Thomas, Dafydd Elis (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy)
Thomas, Rt. Hon. Peter John Mitchell, QC (Hendon, South)
Thomas, Dr. Roger Gareth (Carmarthen)
Thompson, Donald (Calder Valley)
Thompson, Hugh Patrick (Norwich, North)
Thompson, John (Wansbeck)
Thorne, Neil Gordon, OBE, TD (Ilford, South)
Thorne, Stanley George (Preston)
Thornton, George Malcolm (Crosby)
Thurnham, Peter Giles (Bolton, North-East)
Tinn, James (Redcar)
Torney, Thomas William (Bradford, South)
Townend, John Ernest (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril David (Bexleyheath)
Tracey, Richard Patrick (Surbiton)
Trippier, David Austin (Rossendale and Darwen)
Trotter, Neville Guthrie (Tynemouth)
Twinn, Ian David (Edmonton)

V

van Straubenzee, Sir William Radcliffe, MBE (Wokingham)
Varley, Rt. Hon. Eric Graham (Chesterfield)
Vaughan, Sir Gerard Folliott (Reading, East)
Viggers, Peter John (Gosport)

W

Waddington, David Charles, QC (Ribble Valley)
Wainwright, Richard Scurrah (Colne Valley)
Wakeham, Rt. Hon. John (South Colchester and Maldon)
Waldegrave, William Arthur (Bristol, West)
Walden, George Gordon Harvey, CMG (Buckingham)
Walker, Alfred Cecil (Belfast, North)
Walker, Rt. Hon. Harold (Doncaster, Central)
Walker, Rt. Hon. Peter Edward, MBE (Worcester)
Walker, William Connoll (North Tayside)
Wall, Sir Patrick Henry Bligh, MC, VRD (Beverley)
Wallace, James Robert (Orkney and Shetland)
Waller, Gary Peter Anthony (Keighley)
Walters, Dennis, MBE (Westbury)
Ward, John Devereux, CBE (Poole)
Wardell, Gareth Lodwig (Gower)
Wardle, Charles Frederick (Bexhill and Battle)
Wareing, Robert Nelson (Liverpool, West Derby)
Warren, Kenneth Robin (Hastings and Rye)
Watson, John Grenville Bernard (Skipton and Ripon)
Watts, John Arthur (Slough)
Weatherill, Rt. Hon. Bruce Bernard (Croydon, North-East)
Weetch, Kenneth Thomas (Ipswich)
Wells, Sir John Julius (Maidstone)
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6 November 1985

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THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 86**

FIRST VOLUME OF SESSION 1985-86

House of Commons

Wednesday 6 November 1985

The House met at twenty-five minutes past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Message to attend Her Majesty:

The House went:—and having returned;

The Sitting was suspended until half-past Two o'clock, and then resumed.

SESSIONAL ORDERS

ELECTIONS

Ordered,

That all Members who are returned for two or more places in any part of the United Kingdom to make their Election for which of the places they will serve, within one week after it shall appear that there is no question upon the Return for that place; and if anything shall come in question touching the Return or Election of any Member, he is to withdraw during the time the matter is in debate; and that all Members returned upon double Returns do withdraw till their Returns are determined.

Resolved,

That no Peer of the Realm, except a Peer of Ireland, hath any right to give his vote in the Election of any Member to serve in Parliament.

Resolved,

That if it shall appear that any person hath been elected or returned a Member of this House, or endeavoured so to be, by Bribery or any other corrupt practices, this House will proceed with the utmost severity against all such persons as shall have been wilfully concerned in such Bribery or other corrupt practices.

WITNESSES

Resolved,

That if it shall appear that any person hath been tampering with any Witness, in respect of his evidence to be given to this House, or any Committee thereof, or directly or indirectly hath endeavoured to deter or hinder any person from appearing or giving evidence the same is declared to be a high crime and misdemeanour; and this House will proceed with the utmost severity against such offender.

Resolved,

That if it shall appear that any person hath given false evidence in any case before this House, or any Committee thereof, this House will proceed with the utmost severity against such offender.

METROPOLITAN POLICE

Ordered,

That the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis do take care that during the Session of Parliament the passages through the streets leading to this House be kept free and open and that no obstruction be permitted to hinder the passage of Members to and from this House, and that no disorder be allowed in Westminster Hall, or in the passages leading to this House, during the Sitting of Parliament, and that there be no annoyance therein or thereabouts; and that the Serjeant at Arms attending this House do communicate this Order to the Commissioner aforesaid.

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

Resolved,

That the Votes and Proceedings of this House be printed, being first perused by Mr. Speaker; and that he do appoint the printing thereof; and that no person but such as he shall appoint do presume to print the same.

OUTLAWRIES

Bill for the more effectual preventing Clandestine Outlawries; *read the First time; to be read a Second time.*

JOURNAL

Ordered,

That the Journal of this House, from the end of the last Session to the end of the present Session, with an index thereto, be printed.

Ordered,

That the said Journal and Index be printed by the appointment and under the direction of Kenneth Anthony Bradshaw, Esq., CB, the Clerk of this House.

Ordered,

That the said Journal and Index be printed by such person as shall be licensed by Mr. Speaker, and that no other person do presume to print the same.

Queen's Speech

Mr. Speaker: I have to acquaint the House that this House has this day attended Her Majesty in the House of Peers, and that Her Majesty was pleased to make a Most Gracious Speech from the Throne to both Houses of Parliament, of which I have, for greater accuracy, obtained a copy.

I shall direct that the terms of the Gracious Speech be printed at the appropriate place in the Votes and Proceedings. Copies are available in the Vote Office.

The Gracious Speech was as follows:

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

I look forward with great pleasure to receiving His Highness the Amir of Qatar, their Majesties the King and Queen of Spain and the President of the Federal Republic of Germany and Freifrau von Weizsaecker on State visits during the next 12 months.

I also look forward to paying a State visit to Nepal in February, followed by visits to New Zealand and Australia and to paying a State visit to China and visiting Hong Kong in October.

My Government continue to attach the highest importance to the maintenance of national security and the preservation of peace with freedom and justice. They will continue to play a full and active part in the Atlantic Alliance and to enhance the United Kingdom's own defences. They will make vigorous efforts to combat international terrorism.

My Government will continue to work for progress in arms control and disarmament negotiations and for greater co-operation and trust between East and West.

My Government welcome the accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Community and will introduce the necessary legislation. Within the Community, they will work for improved decision taking, strengthened co-operation on foreign policy, early completion of the common market, improvements in world trade rules and reform of the common agricultural policy.

While honouring their undertakings to the people of the Falkland islands, my Government will continue to seek more normal relations with Argentina. They will also continue to discharge their obligations to the people of Hong Kong; and will propose provisions to implement the nationality arrangements arising from the Sino-British joint declaration.

My Government will work for peaceful and fundamental change in South Africa with the European Community and the Commonwealth: for the restoration of peace and stability in Lebanon: and for solutions to the conflict between Iraq and Iran and the Arab/Israel dispute. They will seek to restore an independent and non-aligned Afghanistan. They will support United Nations efforts for a settlement in Cyprus, and those of the Contadora Group to resolve the tensions in Central America.

My Government will give full support to the Commonwealth, and play a constructive role at the United Nations. They will maintain a substantial aid programme; play their part in the relief of famine and of other disasters; and encourage investment in developing countries.

Members of the House of Commons

Estimates for the public service will be laid before you.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

Within the framework of firm monetary and fiscal policies designed to secure a continuing reduction in inflation, my Government will do all in their power to encourage the growth of new jobs. Firm control of public expenditure will be maintained, with a view to diminishing its share of overall national output and facilitating further reductions in the burden of income tax.

My Government will pursue vigorously their programme of privatisation, as a means both of improving the efficiency of the industries concerned, and of encouraging wider share ownership. Measures will be introduced to permit the transfer of the assets of the British Gas Corporation to the private sector and to enable the Atomic Energy Authority to operate as a trading fund from 1 April 1986 with a capital structure and borrowing powers.

A Bill will be proposed to introduce private capital into the British Airports Authority, to require larger local authority airports to be formed into companies, and to regulate certain airport activities.

My Government will bring forward legislation to introduce commercial management to my naval dockyards, as a significant contribution to encouraging a commercial approach and securing value for money in spending on defence.

Legislation will be introduced to facilitate funding by the industry of agricultural research, advice and related services; and to implement European Community arrangements to protect areas of particular environmental sensitivity.

Measures will be introduced to establish a new regulatory framework for the financial services sector, which will enhance its efficiency and competitiveness whilst providing greater safeguards for the interests of investors, and to modernise and liberalise the law governing building societies.

Measures will be brought forward to reform the operation of wages councils, to make provisions concerning the payment of wages and to amend the law on sex discrimination in employment.

Legislation will be introduced to encourage the sale of public sector flats to their tenants and wider private sector involvement in the ownership and management of council housing, and to improve the planning system.

For Scotland, Bills will be introduced to extend the rights of public sector tenants and to facilitate the private ownership of public sector housing stock, to improve legal aid arrangements, and to modify and extend the management structure of salmon fisheries, including further measures to combat illegal salmon fishing throughout Great Britain.

In Northern Ireland my Government will continue to support the security forces in enforcing the law and in working for the eradication of terrorism. They will seek widely acceptable arrangements for the devolution of power. They will seek to improve further their co-operation with the Government of the Irish Republic. Renewed efforts will be made to create and sustain employment, particularly by the encouragement of the private sector.

A Bill will be introduced to reform social security.

Legislation will be introduced for England and Wales to improve the management of schools and to promote the professional effectiveness of teachers.

Measures will be introduced to strengthen the powers of the police in combating disorder, to modernise and codify the common law public order offences in England and Wales and to provide the courts in England and Wales with power to confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking and to penalise the handling of such proceeds.

A Bill will be introduced to remove statutory restrictions on shop opening hours.

A Bill will be brought before you to make new provision for the protection of animals used for experimental or other scientific purposes.

Other measures will be laid before you.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels.

Debate on the Address

[FIRST DAY]

Mr. Speaker: Before I call those Members who are to propose and second the motion on the Loyal Address, it may be for the convenience of the House if I set out the subjects that are suggested for the various days' debates: Thursday 7 November — home affairs; Friday 8 November—foreign affairs and overseas development; Monday 11 November—social security and education issues; Tuesday 12 November—industry and employment issues; Wednesday 13 November—the economy.

2.35 pm

Sir Reginald Eyre (Birmingham, Hall Green): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

Throughout my time as a Member of this honourable House—about 20 years—I have often felt that I have received in all quarters more kindnesses and consideration than anything I have deserved. The privilege that I have in moving the motion strengthens that feeling, and I am very conscious of the honour that is accorded to me, which my constituency and city share.

My constituency consists mainly of pleasant residential areas, including large housing estates, on the southern side of Birmingham. There are only small areas of industrial activity in Hall Green, where the successful production and export of wirework goods, handbag frames and specialised marble cladding are carried on. The great majority of my constituents follow their careers in the commercial, industrial, education and administrative areas of Birmingham.

The schools of the King Edward foundation continue to temper strenuous sons and daughters from all kinds of Birmingham homes. Camp Hill, my own school, stands at the edge of the constituency.

Hall Green claims two famous sons who, in their different ways, have contributed to the cultural life of Britain. One is J. R. R. Tolkien, author of "Lord of the Rings" and other books of huge appeal. The other is Tony Hancock who appeared to have emigrated to the south-east, where he took up residence at 23 Railway cuttings, East Cheam, but I always thought that his humour continued to have a strong Brummagem flavour, as was exemplified in the "Blood Donor", when he said, "It's only a drop of blood to you, but it's life or death to me."

I referred to the large council housing estates in my constituency. They include tower blocks. Despite repeated efforts to improve administration on council housing estates, complaints from tenants about inefficiencies in repairs and transfers of tenancies continued unabated. I hope that the proposals for change in the Gracious Speech will lead to the development of more humane and efficient services to the great benefit of council tenants in my constituency, in Birmingham and throughout the country. The measures to encourage the purchase of flats by tenants will also be welcomed.

[Sir Reginald Eyre]

History has decreed that we have a very diverse and varied society in Birmingham. As a native, every day I see examples of kindness, tolerance and understanding. How else could we put up with each other? People from all groups in the city play active parts in community affairs and become local government and parliamentary candidates. Membership of the city council includes councillors from the ethnic minorities representing six wards in the city, including Handsworth. At the same time, it is fair to emphasise that there is on all sides a strong desire for improving standards. The urban aid programme is much welcomed. Since the Birmingham inner city partnership began in 1978, the Government have provided £125 million in special funds for improvement in the inner areas, including substantial housing renewal projects.

Throughout the city there is clear evidence of the wish for a wider spread of personal independence by way of home and small business ownership. This is accompanied by a powerfully developing desire for an orderly and law-abiding society in which people can live their lives in peace—doing their jobs, developing their businesses and looking after their families in a stable and civilised atmosphere, safe in their streets and homes. That is why the deplorable events at Handsworth came as a great shock, and it is right to make it clear that the overwhelming mass of Birmingham people of all origins —Afro-Caribbean, Asian, other varied groups and the large indigenous population — shared a sense of revulsion against the criminality which was seen as a threat to their security. We want to put those events behind us as soon as possible and to move on to better things. It is essential now that people throughout the city are involved in co-operation with the police in a firm resolve to protect their own law-abiding society. I believe that the measures referred to in the Gracious Speech relating to public order will provide a strengthened framework for this vital purpose.

Perhaps surprisingly for a great inland city, Birmingham has been and still is one of the best recruiting centres for my former service, the Royal Navy. There are so many Navy and former Navy men in the city that, if Drake's drum were to be hung anywhere, there is a strong case for suspending it over spaghetti junction.

It has to be admitted that Birmingham's economy, which is so dependent on manufacturing and on metal bashing industries, was in increasing difficulty during the 1970s as the competitive thrust of world trade sharpened. The world recession of 1980-81 intensified those problems in all industrial centres and struck harshly at Birmingham and the west midlands conurbation. Our great concern about unemployment includes the apprehension that essential modernisation and the adoption of advanced technology in industry can reduce the demand for manpower at a time when the work force is growing.

There is a great realism in Birmingham industry, which knows that we must match world competition in design, quality and cost of production to safeguard existing jobs and to create new ones. Great efforts are being made to meet this challenge and to diversify the local economy, to strengthen existing companies and to encourage the formation of more small businesses and of new service industries so that they all, in their various ways, make the best possible contribution to job creation.

We should acknowledge that progress has been made. The motor industry, which is so important to us—and especially British Leyland which has had substantial Government support—is leaner and fitter, producing an attractive range of new models. The components manufacturers—GKN, Lucas, Wilmott Breeden—and large numbers of smaller suppliers are fighting hard and well to beat strong international competition. Everyone wishing to support the cause of job creation must remember the importance of buying British. The reference in the Gracious Speech to Spain's entry into full membership of the European Community will be welcomed in Birmingham. As a result, one source of unfair competition for our motor industry will be brought under control.

With regard to engineering and manufacturing more generally in the second city, the abolition of the damaging industrial development certificates and the changes in regional policy of 1983 have reduced the severe disadvantages from which Birmingham and the west midlands have suffered for many years. Now grants are available from the Government and the European regional development fund to assist large and small companies to modernise, diversify and to get started.

Under the new regional policy, 156 grants in the west midlands have so far been offered—a total of £17·5 million of approved grants. Most important, with the addition of private money, the total investment associated with the approved projects amounts to £155·7 million, with 11,617 jobs to be created or safeguarded as a result. Another 147 applications are under appraisal. The renewed jewellery and gunsmiths quarter, housing several thousand jobs as highly-skilled operations, was achieved by grants of £1·7 million, attracting over £5 million of private sector investment.

Both Birmingham and Aston universities are contributing high scientific and technological skills to new industrial projects in the city. Remembering its tradition as the city of a thousand trades, Birmingham is encouraging new entrepreneurs. The capacity of Birmingham's small manufacturers should never be underrated. In Tudor times they flooded the entire kingdom with counterfeit coins.

There is a proposition that I should like the Government to consider. The Home Secretary has stated that he wishes to examine ways of bringing together the means and funds available to assist inner areas and to ensure their best and most effective employment. I agree with him in this approach. I ask my right hon. Friend and also my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to consider in this connection one vital basic aspect—the availability of land. There are considerable areas of derelict land in inner Birmingham, as in other cities. Much of it is in public ownership and it is valued at unrealistically high figures.

I look with some envy at the successful policy pursued by the Government in the redevelopment of London's docklands. Could not some agency be set up to put more drive into the process of bringing this land into practical use? I should like to see an agency assembling parcels of land for development and thus attracting more private funds for investment, making sites available for small industrial and business premises, as demand grows, and also making sites available for small homes for sale and for housing associations to provide more sheltered accommodation for the elderly.

The simplified planning zones proposal and the modernised and liberalised law for building societies, referred to in the Gracious Speech, give us new hope for progress in this way. The positive use of inner area wastelands would help to ease the pressure for green belt development and would add to all the efforts to stimulate activity in the inner areas.

Let me describe briefly the other factors and projects, some of them very large indeed, which will help to build up the new Birmingham. The National Exhibition Centre is a product of civic and Birmingham chamber of industry and commerce initiative. It is huge, popular and expanding, attracting thousands of overseas visitors to trade exhibitions, conferences and sporting events of international standard, providing demand for hotels, entertainment and related service industries. It is upon that unrivalled centre that Birmingham's bid for the Olympic games is based. The city will combine with nearby Stoneleigh park to provide supremely attractive facilities.

An added attraction of the city will be the annual Birmingham road race, making use of our unique road formations near the city centre and featuring marching bands and other entertainments for families, making it a festive occasion in the city at the heart of the motor industry. We intend to add the jewel in the crown with the new Birmingham convention centre to foster business tourism. We appreciate Government support for our application for European Community funds.

We shall extend cultural facilities in the city by providing a home for the superb city of Birmingham symphony orchestra under its outstanding conductor Simon Rattle. That will supplement the attraction of a lively theatre world and the renowned Birmingham art gallery. All this will enhance Birmingham's position at the centre of one of the country's premier tourist areas, which includes Warwick, Stratford-on-Avon and the Cotswolds.

Britain's major concentration of manufacturing and commercial activity is in Birmingham. We are proud of that, and we have in the city the energy and will to go forward.

2.52 pm

Mr. Gerald Malone (Aberdeen, South): I second the motion.

I suppose that the first thought that always occurs to those of us who are given this task and honour is why the eyes of the Patronage Secretary should have turned on us.

As I contemplated that thought over the past few days, I concluded that the Patronage Secretary's decision must have had something to do with his reading matter during the recess. I believe that I was mentioned in only one book that was published during the recess, and I thought that my right hon. Friend might have read the flattering reference to me in that book.

I refer hon. Members on both sides of the House to the publication "Humming Birds and Hyenas". Of course, I maintain that the humming birds are on the Government side, and I shall say nothing about the hyenas. I was sure that the Patronage Secretary had read the reference to me, which started, rather flatteringly:

"No one should doubt Malone's profound commitment to getting on."

So far, so good. It went on, rather strangely:

"Malone, though, is ill-served by his physical appearance"——

[Laughter.] I am glad that the House contradicts that view—

"He has very small eyes that, as they constantly swivel for a better view of the main chance, seem to be operating independently of one another."

It is one thing to be thought of as having an independent mind; it is quite another to have the fact testified to by one's eyeballs. The reference continued:

"He is also a hard, combative, aggressive man, temperamentally not equipped for the graceful side of politics."

No wonder the Patronage Secretary chose me for this great honour.

However, the quality of the judgment of the author, who seems to be called Edward Pearce—obviously a nom de plume which must have caused great irritation to the sketch writer of the *Daily Telegraph*—can be assessed by the fact that, after saying all that, he concluded:

"And I like him."

I am deeply grateful for this honour, which I consider to be an honour not only for me, but for my constituency and for the city of Aberdeen, which is also represented by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), whom I congratulate on his success in achieving shadow Cabinet office. I do not intend to say more about that because I do not want to prejudice his chances on Thursday, when I understand that something else might or might not happen to him.

The hon. Gentleman and I are both proud to represent Aberdeen. It is a city of great contrasts: It is a city which has constantly played a part in Scotland's affairs, no more so than now, when it is actively involved in the oil industry. Oil is not all that Aberdeen has to offer. Unlike the constituency represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre), my constituency, although residential in part, is active industrially. It has a fishing industry, a fish processing industry and a shipbuilding industry, over which I regret there is some uncertainty, which I hope will be resolved. Aberdeen has a proud shipbuilding history.

A mark of the character of the people of Aberdeen is that the city has always met new industrial challenges. North sea oil was a great challenge, to which the city adapted. The city has changed with that challenge. For that reason, I am fortunate to represent an urban constituency where the unemployment rate is only 6 per cent. This is due mainly to the character of the people of Aberdeen.

Aberdeen has more than that. The House will know that it has a football club which has known some success, and I trust that it will continue to be successful in the coming season. The club is known for its success on the field, and the quality of its supporters is recognised throughout Europe. Aberdeen's supporters are an example to football club supporters throughout the United Kingdom. Other clubs should try to achieve a similar standard of behaviour.

I am pleased that the Gracious Speech refers to Scotland and particularly to public sector housing in Scotland. In my constituency, selling council houses has been successful, but only up to a point. I am pleased that the policy is now to be taken further. Expenditure on public sector housing in Scotland was successful in the 1930s, but not in the post-war period. It is significant that we have to knock down and rebuild council housing stock built in the 1950s and 1960s, whereas stock built in the 1930s is sought after avidly by council house tenants. Hon. Members on both sides of the House can learn a lesson from that—that the way in which we plan and run council housing stock is unacceptable.

We have taken some steps forward in selling off council housing stock to the private sector, but we must now go

[Mr. Gerald Malone]

further. It is up to the Government to adopt a more radical attitude to public sector housing. Selling it to the private sector is not the whole answer. There are many other options, such as housing co-operatives and other forms of co-ownership. It is crucial that we remove public sector housing stock from politicians' control. That should be our ultimate priority. I hope that the Gracious Speech will take us one step further in that direction.

The Gracious Speech will be judged by people outside the House on whether the Government continue with their policy to reform our industrial base. I believe that they are doing that, not by measures of the type that would be adopted by the Opposition, which would take us back to the evil days of the past, but by facing the challenges of the future.

Many have said that Governments half way through their second term begin to lose spirit and their radical edge. I am pleased to be able to say today that the Gracious Speech does not reveal that fault. This Government were elected to have a radical edge and to continue to try to bring about change in our society, and especially in our industry to make it competitive so that it will stand head and shoulders above our competitors in Europe and the world.

I regret having to say that in the days to come, when we debate the Gracious Speech, we shall probably hear the prescriptions of yesterday from Her Majesty's Opposition. We shall hear tales of more state controls, when we have pushed back the boundaries of such controls, tales of the undoing of the reforms of the trade unions which we have undertaken and which have been so successul, and a programme, in contrast with that put forward in the Gracious Speech, which would, quite simply, turn back the clock in Britain and stop our progress toward a more prosperous future.

I am pleased to note from the Gracious Speech that the Government will continue their efforts to reform our industry. I can take that back to the people of my constituency, who have taken on that challenge. It is my wish that the spirit be translated throughout the United Kingdom, so that the understanding that prosperity can be based only on industries that are truly competitive will at least be realised.

I believe that that is the message of the Gracious Speech. It is a message for the future.

Mr. Speaker: I call the Prime Minister.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I think that my apologies are due to the Prime Minister. I call the Leader of the Opposition.

3.2 pm

Mr. Kinnock: I have long admired your perspicacity, Mr. Speaker, but never more than now.

I warmly compliment the hon. Members for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre) and for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone), who moved and seconded the Loyal Address. I do so without reservation but with the merest twinge of anxiety. On this occasion last year I offered compliments to the hon. Members who moved and seconded the Loyal Address, and appealed to the Prime Minister that the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) be given a job. For once, the Prime Minister agreed with me and the hon. Gentleman is now Under-Secretary of State for a part of the United Kingdom for which I know he has immense affection and strong commitment—Northern Ireland. I shall not be making recommendations this year—but who knows, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South might end up on some bed of thistles in the Scottish Office, and I know that he would find that very difficult.

The hon. Member for Hall Green is well known and respected as a senior Member of this House. Indeed, he will not take it amiss if I say that he even provokes affection in this place—something that has not a little to do with his personal appearance. He is one of the cherubs of the Conservative party, along with the seraphims, the hon. Members for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) and for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), who I am glad to see in his place.

One mystery has been dispelled for me this afternoon. Having discovered the connection between the hon. Member for Hall Green and J. R. Tolkien, through Camp Hill school, I now realise on whom the eminent author modelled Bilbo Baggins. That is a compliment to the hon. Gentleman, which I am sure he will accept.

As the hon. Gentleman reminded us, he has been in this place for 20 years, and there is not the merest blot on his escutcheon, nor on any other part of his apparel or weaponry. There has been not an intemperate word, not so much as an admonition from Mr. Speaker, not a bogus point of order, and not a single rebellion to his name in all those years.

The hon. Gentleman is a model to us all, and to some more than to others. He has a record of concern, of which we heard again this afternoon, for the inner cities. He has been a campaigner for open government and freedom of information, he is committed to the improvement and development of small businesses, and, unlike the Prime Minister, he does not wish to manifest that objective by seeing that all businesses are made small businesses.

Here, indeed, is a paragon, a blameless man—so blameless that that can be the only reason why he is not still a member of Her Majesty's Government. His speech delighted us. We compliment him strongly on it, and I am sure that the whole House is united in that sentiment.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South, the junior member of the Loyal Address partnership today, also delighted us. After hearing of the attention that Mr. Edward Pearce—a rose by any other name—has drawn to the hon. Gentleman's oracular opportunism, I shall continue to think of him from now on as "Ayes to the right."

Hon. Members may recall that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South first became a household name, not as the Member for his present constituency, but as the Conservative candidate for Glasgow, Hillhead in 1982. There he gained fame, if not exactly fortune, and, through the medium of *The Times*, was able to tell us and an unsuspecting public:

> "I have always wanted to be a Member of Parliament, the way that some people have always wanted to be engine drivers."

In view of what the Government have done to engine drivers, I can only hope that, for the sake of us all, they do not have the same intentions for Members of Parliament.

It was a remarkable by-election, as hon. Members will recall. The hon. Gentleman was not, as we have been reminded, elected to represent Glasgow, Hillhead. That

seat was won by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), a Welshman, as everybody knows from his accent—*[Interruption.]* I do not know whether you heard, Mr. Speaker, but I heard an hon. Member comment, "Cheap." One thing that the accent certainly is not is cheap.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South, meanwhile, was obliged to find another locomotive, and off he went to his present constituency. It was unexpected—indeed, some would say that it was even gallant—that he should have gone to Aberdeen, South and climbed aboard there, the then Member having decided that there were more comfortable and possibly safer political pastures.

The House will recall that that Member was Mr. Iain Sproat, affectionately known here sometimes as "Cutya" Sproat. He went off to seek his political fortune elsewhere —in Roxburgh and Berwickshire—and, as we know, he proved to be as good a judge of safe political pastures as he was of social security needs. He was defeated. I am informed by reliable witnesses that on the night of the general election, as Aberdeen, South's Conservatives joined together in the New Marcliffe hotel in celebratory mood to watch the results coming in, they naturally gave particular attention to the verdict of the electors of Roxburgh and Berwickshire. When the news of Mr. Sproat's defeat came through, the new Member for Aberdeen, South was observed in a corner to be whooping with uncontrollable grief. That is a testament, indeed, to his human nature, and we heard a testament to his considerable talent during his speech.

We feel some rather more genuine grief when we contemplate the Queen's Speech which the Government have offered us today. Parts of it will gain some support from the Opposition, although we shall want to scrutinise the details. The reference to Northern Ireland,

"to improve further their co-operation with the Government of the Irish Republic"

is to be commended, but we shall want methods and measures in Northern Ireland which will positively help people in both communities and improve the social environment and the political climate.

The proposals to combat the awful rise in drug selling, drug taking and drug-related crimes will gain support in principle and, depending upon the precise proposals, I suspect support in practice during their progress through the House.

We also welcome the proposals outlined to protect animals used for experiments and other scientific purposes.

A similar welcome cannot be extended to many of the other proposals in the Queen's Speech—proposals for further privatisation, the demolition of the wages councils and, most of all, for what the Government glibly and euphemistically describe as the reform of social security. They will receive no welcome for that from the Opposition. The Government are not interested in improving protection for the poor, the disabled and the old. They are intent upon removing that protection.

The Government are not reforming the social security system. They are intent upon deforming it. In the course of doing that, they will cause great chaos and cost, as well as greater injustice in our society as they take a lot from the needy, to give very little to the destitute. That will be the result of their income support scheme, their social fund, their cuts in housing benefit and the abolition, or at least, as we are now led to expect, their grievous bodily harm to the state earnings-related pension scheme.

The measures that I have mentioned, and others, will meet with the strongest hostility from my right hon. and hon. Friends. Most of all, we shall be condemning the Government for their complete failure, yet again, to offer in this Queen's Speech any policies that will help the economy and the people to get work and get on.

On this occasion last year the Prime Minister opened her speech with the triumphant news:

"While the right hon. Gentleman"—

that is me—

"was speaking, Barclays bank decided to cut by half a percentage point, from 10·5 per cent., the basic bank rate. That is a great tribute to my right hon. Friend"—

the Chancellor of the Exchequer—

"for the firmness with which he has controlled the money supply. The money supply figures were published at 2.30 this afternoon, and the cut in interest rates came shortly thereafter."—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1984; Vol. 67, c. 21.]

A year later, what do we find? Interest rates have, on average, been 3 per cent. higher this year than they were last, and at the moment interest rates are 1 per cent. higher than they were at this time last year. An average £21,000 mortgage now costs £40 a month more than it did at this time last year. Every business man and home buyer knows only too well what that means. Is that a testimony to the Chancellor's firmness in controlling the money supply? Of course it is not. It is a continuing record of flop and failure, so much so that the Chancellor had to go to the Mansion House last month and announce that the money supply figures, which have defined all that is good and bad in our economy for the past six years, suddenly do not matter any more.

There is no more talk about firmness in controlling the money supply. No more claims will be made this afternoon that the Chancellor of the Exchequer—the Maginot of the money supply—can pull interest rates down. Graven images have gone and sacred cows are to be butchered. The sacred cows are now turning out to be old bull, as they were all the time. Everything now is ruled by interest rate rises and public expenditure cuts.

In a country where interest rate rises cripple small, medium and large businesses, where public expenditure cuts deprive communities and people of vital services, the Government's continuing strategy consists entirely of using higher interest rates and public spending cuts as the main weapons of economic policy. That is what the Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his Mansion House speech:

"Should it at any time become desirable to tighten monetary conditions, that would be achieved—and let there be no doubt about this—by bringing about a rise in short-term interest rates".

The trouble is that hardly any of the Government's interest rate rises, on short-term money or long-term money, ever turn out to be short term, because the ending point of the interest rate cycle is always higher than the starting point of the cycle.

The strategy of shrinking our economy is obvious, too, in the Queen's Speech. Stripped of virile phrases about firm policies, we are left with a vacuous combination of higher interest rates and more public spending cuts. It is a sure recipe for a further rundown of our economy. I am not alone in knowing that, and neither are the Labour party and the Trades Union Congress. The Confederation of

[Mr. Kinnock]

British Industry, together with many others, acknowledges the rundown — and continuing rundown — without significant changes in policy. Indeed, many Conservative Members know it. There are members of the Cabinet who realise it.

I am not speaking only about the Secretary of State for Energy, who said at the Conservative party conference, in the understatement of the year:

"Many now find the Government remote, perhaps uncaring, about what concerns them".

I am speaking much more of the Secretary of State for the Environment, who, we are repeatedly told, wants more money for housing, of the Secretary of State for Social Services, who wants more money to maintain the real value of child benefit, and of the Foreign Secretary, who wants more money to stop the lethal cuts that have been made in overseas aid to the Third world in recent years. They are the people who are looking for additional resources, and from the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister, they meet resistance.

If the Prime Minister is asked whose side she is on—on the side of her Secretaries of State or on the side of the Chancellor of the Exchequer—the reply is that she is on the side of the taxpayers. That takes some cheek when, in six years of the right hon. Lady's Government, the tax burden has gone up from 38 per cent. to 44·5 per cent. of the gross national product—an extra £18,000 million on the tax burden. It takes some nerve, too, when the taxpayers are all to pay higher charges for water and for gas than even the boards have been asking for, and when the taxpayers, as mortgage payers and rent payers, are all paying higher charges as a consequence of the Government's policies.

Audacity laced with mendacity is now the right hon. Lady's stock in trade. When the Prime Minister talks of taxpayers, she talks as if there are taxpayers who do nothing but pay, and old people, poor people, sick people, disabled people and homeless people who do nothing but make claims. There is, of course, no such division in our society. She talks as if starving people abroad want to sponge on the British taxpayers.

The truth is that the Prime Minister is getting the British taxpayers absolutely wrong. Does she not realise that the taxpayers are also the parents who are worried about the cuts in child benefit, and worried about the rundown in schools which Her Majesty's inspectors refer to as being inadequate, shabby, dilapidated and outdated? Does the Prime Minister not realise that the taxpayers are the same people who make up the families that are worried about the cuts in house building and the virtual abolition of house improvement grants? Does the Prime Minister not know that the taxpayers, in the most direct and practical way, have been telling the Government that they want their contributions to be used more generously to relieve suffering in the Third world? British taxpayers repeatedly demonstrate those views in every measure of opinion that is made.

It is not only the poor who want the relief of poverty in this decent country, the homeless who want the Government to commence a new house building programme or the jobless who want the Government to combat unemployment. Those are now national demands, and are the products of care, conscience and constructive attitudes. That is not bleeding-heart do-gooding, but the realistic response of millions, who know that division and decay impoverish, demean and endanger the whole of our society. Yet the Prime Minister ignores them and tells the Conservative party conference:

"One thing we will not do. We will not reflate."

The conference cheered that—the turkeys cheered for Christmas.

In reality, the Prime Minister was saying that the Government would not repair homes, hospitals, railways or roads, invest in modernising Britain's industries, educate and train our young people, retrain our adult workers, or expand research and development to give British industry an extra cutting edge in competitiveness. Most of all, the Prime Minister was saying that the Government would do nothing to build a strong, modern manufacturing base, which will be even more vital when the oil runs out. As the Government know, British chambers of commerce, the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade, and just about everyone outside this torpid Government, incessantly say that the Government have provided no answer to the question of what happens "when the oil runs out."

There is another question which the Government never answer. What will they do about unemployment? There are certainly no answers to that in the Queen's Speech. Perhaps we should follow Black Rod back up the corridor to the House of Peers and find the Secretary of State for Employment. Even on the Government's fiddled figures, 3·3 million people are unemployed, 1·25 million have been out of work for more than a year, and 1·5 million under 25 are unemployed. When we ask where the future lies and where jobs will come from, the Secretary of State for Employment says that the real hope for the future lies in tourism. *[Interruption.]* Only a few weeks ago that was in the newspapers, written in his own fair hand. *[Interruption.]*

If that spellbinding answer does not convince people, as it plainly does not convince Tory Members, the Secretary of State tries to take a second trick. He gets the statisticians and samplers of the Department of Employment to tell us that there is hardly any unemployment. Last week a headline in *The Times* read: "940,000 on dole are not seeking work".

The story that it headed began:

"Nearly one million — about a third — of the unemployed claiming benefit are not looking for work, according to the Department of Employment."

Of those 940,000, 200,000 were in part-time, low-paid employment or had just commenced work, and the remaining 740,000 were described as "discouraged workers" who had given up — defeated people. Last Saturday night I met one of them after a meeting in my constituency. He came up to me and said, "Do you want to shake hands with a man in a million?" I asked what he meant, and he said, "I am one of those that the newspapers were writing about last week. I am one of the unemployed who has given up looking for work." He went on, "I have been looking for work since the factory closed in February 1983. I have been everywhere looking for work. I would do anything to get work, but in June this year I decided that I was going to stop. I have even stopped looking at the 'Jobs Vacant' pages in the newspapers."

There are hundreds of thousands of people like that in our country. They have been on courses, they have waited in queues, they have written scores of letters, and made dozens of phone calls. Eventually the day comes when

they just stop looking because they do not want the rising burden of repeated failure and refusal to be added to the basic misery of being without a job, without money, without independence and—this is what is beloved of the Prime Minister—without any choices.

Without any self-pity, the man said to me, "Fifty-four and finished." Then he said, "I saw herself on the telly telling the Tory party conference, 'Come to the 1990s when people can look forward to their retirement.'" He said, "She just doesn't know anything, does she?"

Minutes after meeting that fellow at that meeting in my constituency, I met a youngster who told me that he had stopped looking for work when the board and lodging regulations changed. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Yes. That youngster came home to certain unemployment in an area where there is more than 20 per cent. male unemployment. Why? Because he was afraid of being stranded. He said, "I came home because I thought that it would be better to be unemployed at home than without a roof over my head. Of course, if they ask me, I shall say that I am looking for work, just like I am panning for gold and prospecting for oil as well." He reminded me of a friend of my father's, Mog Miles. Fifty years ago, when he went before the commissioners and was asked whether he was seeking work, he said, "Seeking work? See this whippet by the side of me? It was a racehorse when I started." The one thing that can save people from total despair is such an attitude.

Another man who was looking for work said to me, "Of course I want work. Of course I need work, and I am prepared to go anywhere, if only there is some work." There is no work to be had. This is the insecure society. This is the climate of caution and fear, of anxiety and aggression. Misery can produce tenacity, neighbourliness and humour, but it also spawns great evils, illness, despair and desperation. In some cases it pushes people into resigned aimlessness, and in others it pushes people into dumb resentment. In a few cases misery brings hatred, and that hatred generates its own greed and brutality. I am not saying, nor would I ever say, that unemployment, poverty or hopelessness is the sole cause of crime in our country, still less would I say that those things are excuses for crime. There can be no excuse for the pain, terror and loss that are inflicted increasingly on victims, whoever they are and wherever they live.

This question is asked repeatedly of every Member of the House. I am simply asking, can any rational person believe that a 40 per cent. rise in crime in six years at the same time as the obvious increase in hopelessness brought about by unemployment, deprivation, division and decay, is an accident? Is that a pure coincidence? I do not think that it is an accident. There have always been crimes for gain. Now we have crime for kicks. There has always been crime as an occupation. Now, in our times, we have crime as a brutal, vicious entertainment. That has been the awful change in our times.

The roots of crime have always been in malice and in greed, but a 40 per cent. increase in six years, especially in crimes of robbery and brutality, cannot be explained as a sudden surge of evil and depravity in our generation. It cannot be explained on such irrational grounds.

We want drug sellers to feel the full rigour and the heaviest penalties of the law. We want the law to embrace solvents, gases and all the other awful substances that are used. We want an orderly society, a just society and a secure society. That is fundamental to freedom. The brutishness of crime makes us, like all other decent citizens, angry and vengeful. But anger is not enough. We need action. We need action to help the police to prevent and detect crime. We need action to make their task much easier in many ways. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members can help in that, too. We want action to assist the police in catching and punishing criminals.

The orderly society, however, cannot and will not be gained merely by policing the problems or punishing the results of crime. The police know that. A fairly senior young officer recently said—*[Interruption.]* The whole country will note the amusement with which the Conservatives treat the dreadful problem of rising crime in their period of office. They should have the sense to listen to what the police say. That officer pointed out to me that society could not put all its problems in a dustbin and then ask the police to try to keep the lid on. He was absolutely right. We cannot treat the people or the problems with simplistic answers. We cannot go on making an ever bigger dustbin of decay and unemployment and asking the police to clean it up or to contain it. That is neither reasonable nor realistic. It simply ensures more crime, more criminals, more cruelty and more young people completely alienated and estranged from what the vast majority of our fellow citizens, including the great majority of young people, understand to be tolerable conduct in society.

Clearly, dealing with that problem is not just a matter for the Government. It is also a matter for teachers, for parents and for every responsible citizen in society, but the problem cannot be dealt with unless the Government try to meet it with methods that get at the roots of behaviour, rather than just trying to deal with the results. That is the Government's duty. A Government who destroy jobs, divide people and deny them homes and hope are not doing their duty by the people of this country. In trying to evade the truth that crime is logically, inevitably, historically and obviously rooted in part in social and economic conditions, the Government are deserting their duty.

It is obvious that the Government wish to dodge the obligations which stem from that truth about the roots of much, though not all, of the crime in our society, but that attempt to dodge will not work. The Government will not be acquitted of the guilt for deliberately worsening economic and social conditions in this country and for dividing and depressing both the economy and society. The Government cannot acquit themselves, and they will not be acquitted by the British people, who, when they get the chance, will throw this Government out.

3.33 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): I begin by joining the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) in congratulating my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre) and for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone), who moved and seconded the Loyal Address so eloquently.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hall Green is, as he said, a Birmingham man through and through, devoted to the city and to all that it stands for. He said a good deal about the enterprise of Birmingham, its business, the co-operation between the universitis and industry and the importance of small businesses. Yes, Birmingham faces problems, and my hon. Friend did not attempt to dodge them. We were very interested in his constructive approach to the problems of Handsworth and in his

[The Prime Minister]

proposals to bring derelict land back into positive use. As he said, Birmingham has a great future and is now setting about trying to scoop some more firsts. I congratulate my hon. Friend on his speech and on his splendid record as a Birmingham Member of Parliament.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South is indeed lucky that Edward Pearce has appreciated his endearing diffidence. We appreciate it this afternoon, though I was convinced by his speech that he can still very much see straight. The transformation of the north of Scotland into a world centre for the offshore oil industry is one of the great technological advances of the post-war period, as my hon. Friend said. It has made the far north one of the most prosperous parts of the country by using and embracing change. *[Interruption.]* Its prosperity has been won at no little risk to the oilman, as we saw in the dangers that were described yesterday. I congratulate my hon. Friend on his speech and on the effective way in which he represents his constituents.

We have heard the views of the right hon. Member for Islwyn on the Gracious Speech. Whatever problems we have, he has no solutions for them. I noted that he said that our economy is shrinking, but the fact is that production is at an all-time high, as is investment. I also noticed that he referred to the speech made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. I also should like to refer to my right hon. Friend's excellent speech. He said:

> "We need to win the next general election because the alternative would create the most dangerous decade this century . . . a Labour party undoubtedly influenced and financed by the Marxist Left, a Labour party already propounding economic plans that would be deeply damaging to the free enterprise system and with defence policies that would delight Moscow and dismay Washington."

I am pleased to have a chance to quote from my right hon. Friend's excellent speech.

I noticed that the right hon. Gentleman made considerable strictures about housing. The number of renovation grants paid in private sector housing has averaged 150,000 a year under this Government compared with fewer than 100,000 under Labour. In the public sector, the number of local authority renovations completed has run at 75,000 a year under this Government compared with 47,000 under Labour. We also have 1 million more houses and flats in the dwelling stock than there were under Labour. Labour could not hold a candle to our record on housing and many other issues.

The right hon. Gentleman gave us his views about public expenditure. I understand that not for him the firm control of public expenditure referred to in the Gracious Speech, although firm control of public expenditure is critical to confidence in any Government. We know his universal remedy — more spending, more taxation and more borrowing. If we had more borrowing, the interest rates to which the right hon. Gentleman referred would be infinitely higher, but he has not the wit to know it.

Since the right hon. Gentleman became the leader of his party, Labour has pledged to increase spending on transport and communications by £6 billion, on employment and training measures by £9 billion, on local government by £9 billion, on social security by £10 billion and on housing and health by £17 billion. Indeed, only a fortnight ago he promised to double the aid programme. These are the most reckless promises ever made.

As a former Labour Chief Secretary to the Treasury said, the task of the last Labour Government was

> "rendered impossible by pledges foolishly made without any serious thought as to where the money would come from. You name it we were pledged to increase it".

They are well on the way to doing the same.

Following enormous increases, the consequences were massive cuts — bigger than anything before or since. Indeed, that inveterate diarist, Mrs. Barbara Castle, has recorded that to while away the time in a Cabinet meeting —*[Interruption.]* Labour Members hate being reminded of their reckless stewardship of the economy of Britain. As Mrs. Castle said, one of her colleagues at a Cabinet meeting passed her a rhyme, which said:

> "All things bring and beautiful
> All projects great and small
> All things wise and wonderful
> Denis Healey cuts them all.
> Healey cuts the old age pension
> Although he cuts by stealth
> And when he looks for savings
> Healey cuts the National Health."

And he did, two years in succession.

It is because the Conservative Government have kept firm control of pubic spending that the Gracious Speech can go on to talk about further reductions in the burden of income tax. We must be firm on public spending to be fair to the taxpayer. I contrast the approach of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who in recent months has described how he imagines Labour's fantasies would be paid for, including what he called,

> "some increase in tax revenues."

"Some increase"? Labour's spending plans would require savage increases in taxation, and not just on those earning £20,000 a year, whom the right hon. Gentleman dismisses so contemptuously as rich. It would mean more tax for the primary school head teacher earning £200 a week, who already pays £60 in taxes and contributions. It would mean more tax for the nurse earning £140 a week, who already pays £40 in taxes and contributions. It would mean more tax for the metal worker earnings £185 a week, who already pays £52 a week in taxes and contributions.

It has been said that Socialism was founded to help the working man to keep more of the fruits of his labour. Today's Socialists want to take more. We Conservatives believe that people have a right to keep more of their earnings, as the Gracious Speech makes clear. Not only do they have a right; that is the way to an efficient, competitive and more prosperous economy.

The Gracious Speech continues our reforming approach with a considerable programme of legislation. It provides for measures to promote employment, especially among young people; measures to extend enterprise and increase competition by more privatisation and deregulation; measures to ensure that the social services are effectively managed and soundly financed; measures to strengthen the accountability of local government; and measures to reinforce the powers of the police and the courts in relation to public order and to drugs.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the Prime Minister tell the House why, during the past six years under the Conservative Government, there has been a 40 per cent. increase in reported crime?

The Prime Minister: I will deal with public order later. Crime has increased in all Western industrial

countries and in other countries during the past few years. If the hon. Gentleman can explain that, he can explain the nature of evil.

The legislative programme will be carried forward within a framework described in the Gracious Speech as

"Firm monetary and fiscal policies designed to secure a continuing reduction in inflation."

That is the important thing: a continuing reduction in inflation, which is what the Labour Government signally failed to achieve.

By contrast, the policies of the Leader of the Opposition would inevitably, or by design, lead to a return of rapid inflation, although I notice that he calls it "reflation". It is an insidious word, for it is a deliberate policy to increase prices faster all round—to the housewife and to the business man—and a deliberate policy to slash the value of savings to the pensioner and everyone who saves. It does not stop there. The previous Labour Prime Minister said:

"Higher inflation followed by higher unemployment is the history of the last 20 years."

For that reason, we completely and utterly reject a policy of reflation. We want inflation down; the Labour party wants it up. As a result of our consistent and sound financial policies, this will be our fifth year of uninterrupted economic growth at an average of 3 per cent. a year. This is the first time since the war that we have had such a long period of growth coupled with both balance of payments surpluses and low inflation.

Opposition Members talk disparagingly of the performance of manufacturing industry, but last year British industry exported more manufactured goods than ever before in our history. It is to be congratulated and not criticised. *[Interruption.]* How Opposition Members hate it when manufacturing industry does well. How they hate success. What suits them is poverty and the sort of violence that we get in Socialist areas. Where we find Labour local authorities we find poverty of a deeper sort than anywhere else. Manufacturing investment was up last year by more than 14 per cent. Manufacturing output was 4 per cent. up last year, the biggest rise since 1973.

Yes, the numbers employed in manufacturing are still falling. Indeed, they have been falling since the mid-1960s —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the Prime Minister. The Leader of the Opposition was given a fair hearing, and the Prime Minister should equally have a fair hearing.

The Prime Minister: I am trying to get a fair hearing for the performance of management and the work force in manufacturing industry. The Opposition do not want to hear it. The numbers employed in manufacturing industry have been falling since the mid-1960s. They have been falling in almost every Western industrialised economy. That is a consequence of changes in technology and of the fact that many goods are made more cheaply in the countries around the Pacific basin and in south-east Asia.

But British industry has become more efficient. Manufacturing productivity has increased dramatically, and last year profitability, the foundation of future growth, was at its highest since 1973. This was achieved by the new realism of industry itself, management and work force alike. It was not and could not be achieved by Government and Whitehall.

The duty of Governments is to create the conditions in which enterprise can expand and flourish, and to help in educating and training a skilled work force. The Government have done more to train young people than any other in history. *[Interruption.]* That is the truth, and the right hon. Member the Leader of the Opposition does not falsify it by bellowing from the Opposition Front Bench. The Government have done more to train young people than any other in history. The millionth trainee will enter the Government's youth training scheme before Christmas. But for young people in general the evidence suggests that wage rates set artificially high are destroying their chances of a job. The OECD commented in a recent report that

"minimum wages restrict employment openings and opportunities to upgrade skills, especially among the young."

We agree. We are therefore introducing legislation to reform the wages councils. This will enable employers to offer the wage rate which they can afford and which young people can accept.

The measures that we have already taken have led to a rapid increase in the number of new jobs—675,000 in the past two years, more than in any other country in the European Community. Indeed, new jobs have been created in this country over the past two years at a faster rate than at any time since 1973, but then, of course, the working population has been rising even faster. Even so, the CBI still reports that its members cannot find suitably qualified people for some of the jobs that are available. It is a matter of getting the training right—a task for industry and education.

It is the wealth creators who are the job creators. All economic policies must be designed as a spur to the wealth creators, whether they are brilliant scientists, skilled tradesmen, talented designers, shrewd managers who know the market place or young people with the ideas and initiative to start up on their own. Those who set out to penalise wealth creators, whether by punitive taxation or by too much red tape, are really penalising those who are looking for jobs.

Industry performs much better when it has to compete for customers, when is has to give a reasonable return to the shareholders who invest in its future. Take Jaguar—profits have increased by 54 per cent. since privatisation and there are more than 500 more jobs. Take Amersham international—profits have increased fivefold and there are more than 200 more jobs. We have already transferred to the private sector 12 companies and 400,000 employees, the majority of whom have bought shares in their companies. That is real ownership by the public. That is why there will be a further assault this year on what used to be called the commanding heights of ownership by the state. Provision will be made to privatise the British Gas Corporation, and we hope that British Airways will be transferred to the private sector. Individual share ownership has already doubled under this Government, and we look forward to it doubling again. By the end of this Parliament we shall have reduced the share of our industry in state hands by 40 per cent. That is an excellent record.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): The right hon. Lady has referred to jobs. How can she justify the decline of the British steel industry, especially in Scotland? How can she justify British Steel's intention, which was announced this week, to make men redundant in the tube industry in Lanarkshire at the same time as we are

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

importing from Italy, which has drawn a horse and cart through the quota system? Surely this is something that even the Prime Minister cannot justify.

The Prime Minister: As the Opposition are well aware, there is overproduction of steel and no amount of special pleading can keep steel plants open if their products cannot be sold. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) knows that full well. He could not keep the Ebbw Vale steel plant open. He said at a meeting of his constituents that if we dodge the truth the difficulties and complications will be even worse in the future. This Government have allocated £130 million to purchase part of the quota from the private sector steel industry to keep Ravenscraig going. That was the type of faith that the House showed in trying to keep steel making in Scotland going. In the end, it will depend upon how competitive we are and how much we can sell in co-operation with the European Coal and Steel Community.

It is only by continuing the economic policies that have already brought four years of sustained growth that we shall be able to pay for improved public services. They have improved under this Government. In the National Health Service, we have not only increased provision but achieved greater efficiency. More patients are being treated under a Conservative National Health Service. Waiting lists have been cut and more hospitals have been built.

In education, spending per pupil and pupil-teacher ratios are at their best ever levels, but the quality of education needs to be and must be improved. That is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is insisting on agreement to a new pay structure and conditions of service. Only then will he release the very substantial sums of money available to increase teachers' pay—£1·25 billion over the next four years. This Session's Education Bill will provide for a national system of appraisal to enable all teachers to improve their performance and to help the better teachers get more promotion and more pay.

This Session we shall introduce a Bill, which I understand the Leader of the Opposition will not support, to implement the most fundamental review of social security for 40 years. The Bill will help to create a modern, effective social security system which future generations can afford, a social security system which will direct resources to those most in need, be based on sound finance and not on hollow promises; and which will strengthen incentives to work, so that nobody is worse off by taking a job. There are too many cases, even at a time of high unemployment, of jobs remaining unfilled because potential applicants are better off not working.

Last session saw the successful passage of the Bill to abolish the Greater London Council and the Metropolitan county councils. The unscrupulous use of ratepayers' money by those councils to mount massive scare campaigns reinforced the case for their abolition. It also demonstrated clearly that we can no longer take for granted in some Labour councils the conventions of responsible public service which used to inspire councillors of all parties.

We are therefore introducing this Session a Bill along the lines proposed by the independent Widdicombe committee to ban the use of ratepayers' money to finance political propaganda. The Bill will also lay a statutory duty on all rating authorities to make their rate by April every year. These measures will be an important check on abuses by some local authorities.

We shall also be publishing our proposals for a major reform of the rating system. We can no longer tolerate a system in which the burden of local taxation is so unfairly distributed, nor a system which permits extravagant local authorities to fleece the business ratepayer to finance excessive levels of spending. There is no surer way of driving jobs away from some of our inner cities.

The Home Office will be having its customary busy parliamentary Session. In addition to legislation on public order, to which I shall refer shortly, it will be introducing three major Bills. First, my right hon. Friend will be introducing shops legislation in line with the main recommendations of the Auld committee. I recognise the difficulty that this measure will cause to some of my hon. Friends. Indeed, many people, both customers and shopkeepers, will wish to preserve the traditional Sunday and will not take advantage of a change in the law. But I believe that it is absolutely right to give people the choice. The present state of the law is indefensible.

Second, my right hon. Friend will also be introducing the first reform for 109 years of the law on experiments on living animals. I believe that this will be widely welcomed throughout the House and outside, and I hope that it will secure a speedy passage.

Third, we shall be taking further action against drugs offenders. Following the excellent report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs last Session, we shall be introducing a Bill to provide wide new powers for tracing and confiscating the proceeds of drug trafficking. I believe that this measure, too, will be supported throughout the House: The war against the drugs trade is one in which all decent people will expect us to unite.

Before most of this legislation can be introduced, the historic meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev, due two weeks from now, will have taken place. Both leaders have accepted the aim of reducing nuclear weapons. The United States has long had detailed proposals on the table for deep, balanced and verifiable reductions. Now it has responded promptly to the recent Soviet counter proposals and offered to build on the positive elements in them. The test of Soviet intentions will be Mr. Gorbachev's willingness to engage in real negotiations.

President Reagan has undertaken that the United States' strategic defence initiative research programme will remain clearly within the bounds of the ABM treaty. I hope that the Soviet Union's own very extensive programme will be similarly contained. Indeed, I believe that a reaffirmation and strengthening of the ABM treaty would be a positive and commendable outcome of the summit.

I hope, too, that the President and Mr. Gorbachev will commit themselves to make progress in other arms control negotiations, above all, the negotiations on chemical weapons and on mutually balanced force reductions in Europe, which, for more than 10 years, have made little progress. It has been NATO's strength and steadfastness which have brought us to the point where we can hope for real reductions in nuclear armaments on both sides.

When the Defence Ministers of the 16 NATO countries met last week, their communiqué said:

"We declare that the President goes to Geneva with the full support and solidarity of the Alliance."

The Government side of the House is united in offering that support.

During the debate on the Gracious Speech last year I said that upholding the rule of law was the crucial issue facing this country. The disturbances that we have seen in a few of Britain's inner cities have made that all the more apparent. Indeed, it is the vast majority of people living there—the old, the families with young children, the small business men—who have most to lose from a breakdown of law and order. It is they—not the rioters—who have lost their homes, their shops and, most of all, their peace of mind.

Of course, there are very severe social problems in the inner city areas—problems of family breakdown, of racial tension, of drug abuse, of youth unemployment, of bad housing. In so far as money can help, those problems are taken into account in public expenditure, including the urban programme on which £1,900 million has been spent since 1979. Considerable sums had already been spent in the areas affected by riots.

But the kind of violence which took place on the streets of Brixton, Handsworth and Tottenham recently cannot and will not be eradicated by money. The solution must ultimately lie in a strengthening of our traditional sources of discipline and authority—the family, the Church, the school, responsible community and civic leadership and support for the police.

The Government have made it clear that the police will have the resouces that they need in the fight against crime. When this Session's public order Bill has become law, they will also have more powers to prevent and deal with violence and disorder. But those measures alone are not enough. If the rest of us fail to support the police, if we undermine by words or deeds the rule of law, the fight against lawlessness will be jeopardised.

It is not good enough for the Labour party to stand aside and tolerate Labour local authorities which harass and obstruct the police. It is not good enough for the Labour party to claim that it supports the police, while its conference is passing anti-police motions and cheering to the echo descriptions of the police as "the enemy". And it is not good enough for the right hon. Member for Islwyn to condemn the words of the leader of Haringey council against the police while continuing to endorse him as a Labour candidate for election to this House.

A party leadership which stands by while sections of its party undermine the police cannot be taken seriously when it talks of support for the law. Either it stands up for the law or it does not; it cannot have it both ways. The Government rest firmly on respect for the rule of law, and it is on that fundamental basis that I commend to the House the forward-looking programme set out in the Gracious speech.

4.4 pm

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I happily join the other party leaders in congratulating the mover and seconder of the Loyal Address.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre) is a respected senior colleague and a former Minister and we greatly enjoyed his references to his previous constituents. I noted with particular enjoyment his reference to Tony Hancock and the episode in the "Blood Donor". The hon. Gentleman might have regaled the House with the line that I remember best from that episode. Tony Hancock was explaining to the attendant at the blood donor centre why he had been motivated to go to the centre. He said that he felt that he had to do something for his country and it was either giving blood or joining the Young Conservatives. I believe that Tony Hancock made the right choice, and I am sure that the hon. Member for Hall Green agrees.

On a more serious note, the hon. Member for Hall Green was surely right to make a plea to the Government to invest more in our decaying cities and less in the green belt. His view finds an echo on the Opposition side.

I have a warm affection for the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone). The leader of the Labour party gave a less than complete biography of the hon. Gentleman whose contribution to the alliance began not with his defeat in a by-election by my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), but in the 1979 election with his defeat by me at Roxburgh, Selkirk and Peebles. The hon. Gentleman is a unique embodiment of how much the Liberal party and the SDP have in common.

Again on a serious note, we not only enjoy the hon. Gentleman's self-deprecating humour and appreciate his obviously genuine devotion to Aberdeen after sojourns in the Borders and Glasgow, but I strongly agree with him that the success of the Government will be judged by how they manage to reform our industrial base. On that proposition, we can rest content and we shall see what happens in the next year or two.

There is no doubt that the whole tone of the Queen's Speech follows closely the tone of the Conservative party conference. The whole emphasis was on the presentation of policies rather than on the policies themselves. Any criticism was of the presentation, not the substance.

Great emphasis is placed on presentation, so much so that, during the Conservative party conference, *The Guardian* reported:

"It is a week in which presentation . . . is the name of the game."

It reported a particular and, I believe, significant episode:

"Mr. John Patten, the new Minister for the Environment, may have gone too far presentationwise. An advance handout of his speech winding up a local government debate began: 'This has been a marvellous debate.' It was distributed some two hours before the debate began."

That is the sort of presentation that we are becoming used to and we find echoes of it in various phrases throughout the Gracious Speech. For example, we are told that the,

"Government will continue to work for progress in arms control and disarmament negotiations".

Continue to work? What efforts have the Government made in arms control negotiations? Not only did they refuse to count in the Polaris missile system during previous East-West discussions, despite almost semi-public prodding by Vice-President Bush to do so, but they have made a lukewarm response—to put it mildly—to Mr. Gorbachev's alternative suggestion that there could be direct discussions to see whether reductions on both sides could be achieved between Britain and the Soviet Union.

The House has debated many times the effect on the Budget in general and on conventional defence spending in particular of the Government's commitment to the Trident missile programme. We do not concentrate often enough on the fact that that commitment represents a major escalation of nuclear fire power by this country at a time when we hope for greater optimism in East-West

[Mr. David Steel]

relations. An increase from a targeting capability of 64 to 896 is not working towards arms control and reductions; that is working positively for a major escalation of nuclear fire power. There is a gap between the presentation and the reality.

In the next paragraph of the Gracious Speech we are told that within the European Community the Government

"will work for improved decision taking".

They could have fooled me. Where have we found Britain in recent Community discussions? We have been in company with Denmark and Greece in resisting the political and constitutional reforms that are necessary to end stagnation within the Community. That will be an important issue as Spain and Portugal join the Community. I hope that it signals a major change in the Government's attitude to the Community.

The Queen's Speech states that the Government

"will continue to seek more normal relations with Argentina."

I hope that that will be so. I was glad to see published for the first time in yesterday's press a fact that I reported privately to the Foreign Office a couple of weeks ago following my discussions with President Alfonsin—that the Argentine Government are ready to join in a multilateral effort to secure agreements on fishing. It is a small step, but it is welcome, and I hope that the Government will build on it.

My basic quarrel is with the Government's negative stance on the future of the Falklands. We tend to forget that, proud though we all were of our great victory in the Falklands, we not only brought liberty to the Falkland Islands but we were also instrumental in bringing liberty and democracy to Argentina. We have not built upon that, nor have we built upon the good will generated there.

If the Government were willing to negotiate the future constitution of the Falkland Islands with a military dictatorship, it is not unreasonable to ask two democracies to come to an agreement on this long-standing dispute. We should be looking forward in this Session to the lifting of the protection zone, the cessation of hostilities, and a return to normal diplomatic relations. If no other argument appeals to the Prime Minister, she should listen to the many British business men who are complaining bitterly about the loss of trade and export potential.

The Queen's Speech continues:

"My Government will work for peaceful and fundamental change in South Africa with the European Community and the Commonwealth".

I hope that the emphasis will be on work, not just hope, because "peaceful and fundamental change" is what we are after.

The Government's record is not good. At the European Community meeting the unfortunate Minister of State took a negative stance and, even in the tiny sanctions agreed by the other Community countries, following the Prime Minister's performance in the Bahamas, we held out to resist any international pressure on South Africa. That does not give us hope that the Government intend to work constructively to ensure a peaceful change.

I asked someone who was in the Bahamas at the time whether the atmosphere was as bad as it appeared to us at home, and I was told that it was worse. I was told, "You do not understand. Your Prime Minister treats other Heads of Government as if they were members of the Dorking Conservative association with the same narrow, blinkered view of the world perspective." I appreciate that a growing part of Conservative philosophy is to believe that everyone else is wrong and that the Tory Government are right, but I hope that the Government really intend to work for that change and that it is not mere presentation.

The Government promise to

"maintain a substantial aid programme."

No one could honestly use the word "maintain" in relation to the Government's aid programme. Our contribution has never reached 0·7 per cent. of gross domestic product—the United Nations target. When the Government took office our contribution was 0·52 per cent., and it is now only 0·33 per cent. Our contribution is in decline. When we came back after the summer recess we were treated to a warm demonstration from the World Development Movement. It was one of the most impressive demonstrations outside the House for many years. I remember asking the Leader of the House, who was standing in for the Prime Minister, why we gave only $25 a head to overseas aid when the Americans gave $37 per head and the French $47. He said that one had to consider the relative strength of resources. That is fair, but the Canadians gave $65 per head and the Danes and the Dutch $88. That has nothing to do with the strength of resources, but more to do with strength of will—or the lack of it. Maintaining "a substantial aid progamme" must be more than presentation; it must become a reality.

Similar phraseology is used in relation to domestic matters. We are told:

"Legislation will be introduced to facilitate funding by the industry of agricultural research, advice and related services".

That is a euphemism for cutting agricultural research along with medical, scientific and engineering research. The words "facilitate funding" seem to bestow a benefit upon agricultural research, but no one in the farming world will believe that for a second.

The Gracious Speech says:

"Measures will be brought forward to reform the operation of Wages Councils".

If the Government intend to make it easier to bring young people into the labour market without plunging straight in at adult wage rates, they will get some sympathy, but we suspect that this proposal might open the door to a return to sweatshops for young people because the Government intend to abandon the International Labour Organisation code. Why do they intend to do that if reform is their genuine aim?

In Scotland legislation is planned

"to improve legal aid arrangements".

The legal profession in Scotland knows what that means. It means cutting legal aid access; it has nothing to do with improving legal aid arrangements. That is another example of presentation which has nothing to do with reality.

The most brazen piece of presentation is contained in the paragraph which says:

"Legislation will be introduced . . . to promote the professional effectiveness of teachers."

This Government have done more to undermine the professional effectiveness of teachers than any previous Government. I met union members yesterday, so I know what I am talking about. They reinforced my view that the issue is not just about the current pay dispute, but about the Government's attitude to education. We must take note of the Audit Commission report on the universities published yesterday. We must take into account what has happened to school books and buildings.

Of course, a problem is caused by falling school rolls, but the Government have given the figures as expenditure per head, which conceals the decline in morale in the classrooms.

The Prime Minister referrred to the powers of the police in combating disorder. We shall give our constructive support to any legislation designed to combat public disorder. However, we must be careful that we do not turn our police into a buffer to deal with problems which politicians and society have failed to tackle. I say that retrospectively with reference to the miners' dispute and to the inner city problems. It is no use piling all the responsibility on to the police if we have not tackled the root of the problem.

The crime record under the present Government is appalling. It reveals a glaring gap between presentation and image and reality. The Government claim to be the Government of law and order. The people believe it because Conservatives constantly make speeches about it, but their record reveals something different.

All reported crimes are up 40 per cent. Crimes of violence are up 20 per cent., robberies have doubled, and burglaries have nearly doubled since the Government came to power. Crimes against property have increased, and I believe unemployment to be the root cause. People who are not part of the criminal fraternity are turning to crime almost as a way of life. We must tackle that problem immediately.

We shall support any Government moves to tackle drug addiction. The increase in drug addiction is also related to some extent to the feeling of helplessness in our inner cities — [HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] Hon. Members may doubt that, but one of the most depressing conversations that I had during the summer was when I spent a week in Liverpool. I met members of the Merseyside drug council and talked to drug addicts. One addict commented to me, "What is the point of coming off drugs? What is it for?" When there is that feeling of frustration, helplessness and hopelessness among some of our young people, we have an obligation to be aware that it exists. We must tackle that as well as the problem of drug trafficking, although I welcome what the Prime Minister had to say about that. To ignore that atmosphere, to say that it is all a question of going after the pushers, is to ignore what life is really like in our inner cities.

I am sorry that the Prime Minister did not have time to see the Rev. Jesse Jackson when he was here, although I do not criticise her. He saw the other party leaders individually and voiced important opinions about the effect of black consciousness in the inner cities and the American experience. He gave one very good piece of advice to the black community in this country, which deserves wider attention, about recruitment to the police force. It is undoubtedly true that while only 300 of our 20,000 Metropolitan police are black, the tensions that Lord Scarman highlighted in his 1981 report will continue. The Rev. Jesse Jackson said that the attitude of blacks boycotting entrance into the police was wrong, and we must all endorse what he said. We must try to recruit more black people into the police and integrate them — *[Interruption.]* I wish that the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) would not interrupt from a sedentary position and make such ludicrous remarks. I object to those who, on political grounds, say that they are not interested in entering the police force. I am not saying that there should be different qualifications for different people; only that we should recruit more black people.

Surely we want people to help themselves. I say to the leader of the Labour party that one of the problems of the Labour council in Liverpool is that it believes that it can find the people to do for Liverpool people what they should be doing for themselves. It appointed as a race relations officer a member of Militant Tendency — a surveyor in London. Yet there is a perfectly good black consciousness movement in the city capable of generating its own leadership, and it should be encouraged to do so.

This summer I also visited Handsworth, some time after the riots had occurred. Again, there is a lesson to be learned. The Prime Minister and the Home Secretary——

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): The right hon. Gentleman is telling the Labour party what it should be doing, yet the Liberal party was in control of the city of Liverpool for 10 years, during which time it stopped the building of council houses, slashed student grants, sacked 4,000 workers from the Liverpool corporation and refused a grant to Toxteth community council almost immediately after the riots so that the bill had to be met by the Labour-controlled Merseyside county council. The right hon. Gentleman's remarks are rich indeed.

Mr. Steel: I shall happily send the hon. Gentleman the 66-page document that we have prepared showing how false are the statements being made by the hon. Gentleman, Mr. Hatton and others — *[Interruption.]* I am sorry that I have been diverted from my speech, but I wish to deal with this point. During the Liberal party's period of control in Liverpool, there was a switch from council housing to co-operative and other forms of low-cost housing. In a city that has thousands of empty council houses, to talk about building more and giving people what the Labour party thinks is best for them is quite the wrong attitude. If the hon. Gentleman had dared to talk to the Eldon housing co-operative, which has many good Labour party members, he would have learned a great deal about what should be done for housing in the city, and at much less public expense than the Labour party's proposals.

Birmingham gives us an important lesson in the way in which money has been spent in the cities. The Prime Minister was right to say that a great deal of money has been spent in those areas——

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton) *rose*——

Mr. Steel: I shall not give way. Although I am usually willing to give way, I have now moved from Liverpool to Birmingham. This will not be the last time that we discuss the problems of Liverpool, and I look forward to returning to them in future.

There is an important lesson to be learned from Handsworth. I accept that money has been spent there, but one of the complaints of the people of Handsworth is that it has gone to outside national contractors which have brought in outside labour, carried out the work, and taken away the profits. We must look for better ways to spend the money.

A specific complaint is that projects put forward by the community following the 1981 experience have not yet been processed. I could not believe that and asked that the details be sent to me. The other day I forwarded to the

[Mr. Steel]

Home Secretary one specific example of this problem. A self-help project was proposed by the Afro-Caribbean group. It was dated 11 September 1981, but has still not been processed by the city council and the Manpower Services Commission. The project would involve young, unemployed blacks in restoring and repairing houses in the area. Surely that is the sort of project that we should be encouraging. Rather than throw money at the problem, we should use money to help people to help themselves.

What I have said about the inner cities is true of the general housing position. The Government's house-building record is appalling. We hope that the Secretary of State for the Environment will succeed in persuading his Cabinet colleagues that the house repair problem is serious. It must be tackled more imaginatively. More could be done by turning local authority estates and new council housing into housing co-operatives. That is the way for the future, and it is one means of building communities rather than simply building houses. The Government should concentrate on that.

Finally, and most important of all, my quarrel with the tone of the Gracious Speech is that it offers nothing towards changing the Government's economic direction. It refers to

"improving the efficiency of industries"

and to certain privatisation measures. Some of those measures may be acceptable, but we will have to wait to see the legislation. However, none of that is relevant to the central issues. The sale of assets, whatever the merit in spreading share ownership, is simply Treasury creative accounting. What will the Government do after the next election when there is nothing left to sell? What will they do in five years when there is no oil revenue? They have raised billions of pounds of capital from the sale of public assets, but pumped nothing back into the investment and infrastructure of our country.

It is significant that during the past few weeks other people—usually sympathetic to the Conservative party—have made that same criticism. Reference has already been made to the House of Lords Select Committee report. Not only was the report all-party, which is unusual; it was signed by people who are not theoretical economists, but have major experience of the industrial and commercial life of our country. In the report they said:

"Unless the climate is changed so that steps can be taken to enlarge the manufacturing base, combat import penetration and stimulate the export of manufactured goods, as oil revenues diminish the country will experience adverse effects which . . . constitute a grave threat to the standard of living and to the economic and political stability of the nation . . . Urgent action is required."

The Association of British Chambers of Commerce said that there should be a much more positive Government approach to manufacturing industry and that the Government's decision to reject the House of Lords report had been "rash and unwise".

The Confederation of British Industry spoke about the Chancellor

"tying British industry's shoelaces together"

with a combination of high interest rates and an over-valued pound.

The president of the Chartered Institute of Building said that the Government must act; they have got it wrong. He said that the Government seemed devoid of meaningful ideas, yet rejected serious initiatives from industry. He said that the harsh, unpalatable fact was that Britain was spending a much lower proportion of GNP on superstructure and infrastructure.

This autumn the alliance published its detailed budget proposals, designed to stimulate the economy, to obtain some growth and to create jobs. They were tested on the Treasury model. The Government may disagree with them, but they cannot doubt their validity. We should concentrate hard on improving our manufacturing and economic base.

This is fundamentally a tinkering Gracious Speech; it does not go to the heart of the problem. It is all presentation. The Government, in rejecting all those other people's views, remind me a little of a Victorian embroidery that I recall seeing on a wall in the home of an elderly couple in my constituency. I can imagine the Prime Minister saying to the Chancellor of the Exchequer,

"All the world's a little wrong save thee and me, and even thee's a little wrong."

That sort of attitude will not carry the Government through. The editor of the *Spectator* was correct in his view of the Government's presentation when he commented:

"it is a waste of time for anyone to try to alter the Prime Minister's political persona. You may be able to persuade her to raise her voice or lower it, but it will still say the same things."

That is true, and, because of it, the Government refuse to listen and to change and they are leading us to disaster in the long run. Because the Government will not change, we must change the Government.

4.31 pm

Mr. John Spence (Ryedale): Despite what Opposition Members have said, many on these Benches, and the majority of people in the country, will welcome the provisions in the Queen's Speech and the programme to which we are looking forward.

I am happy to see an undertaking:

"A Bill will be brought before"

Parliament

"to make new provision for the protection of animals used for experimental or other scientific purposes."

I am glad to note that this issue is now regarded as one of extreme importance. For far too long we have been dragging our feet on animal protection, and I am glad that that measure will be introduced.

A related matter which I hope can be latched on to that provision is the need to broaden the general base of animal welfare. The enforcement of animal welfare laws depends largely on codes which have a legislative base. The time has come for those codes to be reviewed and farmers and producers would particularly welcome such a revision if it dealt with factory farming methods for the production of pigs, poultry and veal calves. It would be a great help if, when the new measure is introduced, it could be expanded to include a revision of the codes to enable stricter rules to be enforced.

It would be wise for the Government to consider the time scale within which experimentation and, in particular, animal welfare provisions are implemented. Many millions of pounds are invested in my constituency in factory farming, particularly in the three areas to which I have referred. Any provisions that are made should recognise the time scale in which the investment might have to be altered or written off. The obvious one is battery poultry, where the investment is considerable. I am sure that agreement could be reached with the Community and

consumer interests on such matters as cage sizes. The whole issue is enormously important to the welfare and employment of many people in my constituency.

I welcome the undertaking on the common agricultural policy. Surpluses are becoming an embarrassment, and something must be done about them quickly. We either use them, or we do not produce them. The answer is as simple as that.

The Leader of the Opposition intended, I believe, to convey less than hearty support, and even a measure of contempt, for the tourist industry. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that, at any rate in the part of the country that I represent, the industry is primarily in the hands of small business people and that it is a major contributor to the economy of the area. It was disgraceful of the Leader of the Opposition to imply such an attitude towards an important source of livelihood for many of my constituents, who have skill and training in tourism.

Let us not forget that the tourist and leisure industries have increased fifteenfold in the last 20 years and now employ 1·3 million people. In the Yorkshire and Humberside region alone, those industries have expanded by 25 per cent. in the last four years and now employ up to 65,000 people. By any standard, that has been a major industrial achievement. In my constituency alone — I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir. M. Shaw) will give the figures for his constituency—the increase has been phenomenal, rising by one third in four years and now employing over 2,000 people, bringing tremendous income to that part of the country. It was, therefore, unfair and unreasonable for the Leader of the Opposition to have spoken in those terms.

We must also bear in mind the industries ancillary to tourism, such as construction, food manufacturing, transport and consumer spending generally associated with holiday areas. It all adds up to make tourism a major national and regional industry. Accordingly, it is a move in the right direction to have brought tourism under the responsibility of the Department of Employment. I hope that that means that the Government recognise the employment potential of this important industry.

The whole question of shop opening hours must be related to the tourist and leisure industries. Not just holidaymakers, but people generally, want to be able to shop more or less as and when they like. They want to be able to purchase a meal or drink not necessarily in accordance with the present opening hours. Thus, the proposal to revise shop opening hours will be welcome —*[Interruption.]*—especially in areas which cater for holidaymakers.

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): In view of some of the comments that were made by Opposition Members when my hon. Friend said that the proposal to revise shop opening hours would be welcome, may I remind him that in Scotland, where Sunday trading is the norm, people tend to have a stronger faith, in that the rate of churchgoing is higher than it is in England?

Mr. Spence: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for making that point. There will be adequate opportunity for hon. Members to develop that and similar arguments, in relation not only to Scotland but to other parts of the United Kingdom.

I welcome the new signposting experiments that are being conducted in two areas. That, too, will be of importance to the tourist industry — an industry which the Leader of the Opposition does not particularly like. When one speaks of the signposting of facilities in holiday and recreational areas, one is immediately accused of being a Philistine, of wanting to see whole areas covered in garish signs, whereas nothing could be further from the truth.

Elsewhere in Europe, in sensitive areas such as national parks, signposting is done in such a way as to complement both the area and the investment that people have made in the facilities being provided. I hope that the results of the experiments being conducted in this country will enable us to extend signposting in that way.

As I pointed out, the tourist industry is largely in the hands of moderately small employers. A factor which they find difficult when extending or expanding their business —this applies particularly to one-man concerns—is the incidence of VAT. I am not referring to the payment of the tax, because we must all pay it. In the early days of a business, the VAT threshold is far too low. I welcome the proposal that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, with the European Community, will endeavour to increase that base. That will be a major help to our small businesses and to people starting a business. It is a major inhibiting factor.

I compliment the tourist boards in the northern region on their initiative in forming a consortium with Manchester airport. The consortium is embarking upon a substantial overseas promotion of the north of England. The project is being financed largely by northern gateway sea and airports. It is a positive effort by the consortium to persuade overseas visitors that there is more to England than London. The promotion will consist of special brochures and an extensive programme of exhibitions in north America and northern Europe during the next six months.

The opening of the British Travel Centre in London, to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment referred recently, is intended as a practical service to overseas visitors. It will advise them on the attractions of the rest of Great Britain and enable them to make travel and accommodation arrangements for the further exploration of the country. It is a mark of the confidence and energy of the industry in our regions.

The measures in the Gracious Speech are much wider than those to which I have referred. I have mentioned some of the vital issues that affect my constituency and those who work and try to achieve greater wealth and prosperity for our country.

4.42 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): The hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Spence) will not expect me to follow him on the subject of Sunday trading hours. He will not expect me to support what he said. I imagine that we shall find ourselves in opposite Division Lobbies in the coming Session.

I make no complaint against the Prime Minister for her omission of any reference to that section of the Gracious Speech which mentioned Northen Ireland, because I appreciate that she would not wish to go beyond what is carefully set out in the Gracious Speech. I trust that her silence and failure to refer to that section—again I am not blaming her — is a sign that she does not have a closed mind, especially on the outcome of the Anglo-Irish talks. The Leader of the Opposition and I are in the same

[Mr. James Molyneaux]

position in one regard: we are not in the know about those talks. I trust that the Prime Minister will not disregard our views, or those of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), who I hope will catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or any advice that we may give in the coming critical days.

We welcome the sentence in the Gracious Speech at the opening of the paragraph on Northern Ireland which pledges the Government's support for the security forces. There is a matching statement in the international section of the Gracious Speech, in which the Government promise to

"make vigorous efforts to combat international terrorism."

As terrorism in Northern Ireland is plainly one element in the international terrorist scene, Her Majesty's Government have a right to expect unconditional support for their efforts from all civilised nations without price tags being attached.

We trust that there is no truth in the report that during the Anglo-Irish discussions earlier — I emphasise "earlier" — the two Governments considered a barter arrangement under which the quid pro quo for the United Kingdom would be the promise of some co-operation from the Government of the Irish Republic in return for significant concessions at the expense of the people of Northern Ireland.

I repeat that that may have been discussed earlier, but it can hardly be a factor in the light of the known assessment by the Army and the police that any such undertaking by the British Government would be worthless and meaningless. That is not intended to be a hostile comment. I say that because one of the obvious defects in any such undertaking—and only one—is the obstacle to effective joint action between the Irish army and the Irish police, because the Irish army does not have powers which would make co-operation with the Gardai effective, nor does it want those powers.

People talk glibly about effective co-operation between the security forces on either side of the frontier. It is nonsense which no one should attempt to deny because of the defect I have mentioned. It is sheer folly to imagine that any Dublin Government could deliver on anti-terrorist promises. That is now recognised by all involved, because, given the proportional representation electoral system in Dublin, no Government have a stable base in the Parliament of the Irish Republic.

The Gracious Speech says that the Government

"will seek to improve further their co-operation with the Government of the Irish Republic."

We assume that that means bringing up to a level which would be regarded as normal relations between two neighbouring sovereign, friendly nations. If that is what is meant by that phrase, Ulster Unionists will agree, and the hon. Member for Antrim, North and I said so in a document which we delivered to the Prime Minister. We recognise the enormity of the task of bringing relations between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic up to what we, and I believe all civilised nations, would regard as the norm.

It might be prudent to take as a guide an earlier phrase from the Gracious Speech, because it is a more modest suggestion. The phrase is contained in the international section and it talks about trying to establish "more normal relations" with another foreign sovereign state. That more modest objective would be prudent, because there are so many obstacles to remove before we can have a normal relationship with the Irish Republic. I shall list some of the problems. The first is the territorial claim by one neighbouring friendly state which is unique in western Europe and the Western world. The second is the habit and practice of the Irish Republic consorting with unaligned states on, for example, major international issues such as the Falklands war. The third is a regrettable tendency to drag Her Majesty's Government, whether it be Labour or Conservative, before international courts, usually on trumped-up charges. The fourth is the fact, which makes some of us despair, that they make rather hysterical protests over accidental, minor frontier infringements.

Those are but a few of the obstacles to the normal relationship, which must be removed before we can start to talk about the unique relationship beloved by Mr. Haughey. We are prepared to support Her Majesty's Government in removing those road blocks, and removed they must be before anyone can contemplate a degree of interference or influence in another's internal affairs.

We have never sought to interfere in the internal affairs of the Irish Republic. Criticisms are made by others, but we have taken the view — I think that I speak for Unionist parties, in the plural—that whatever is decided by the people of the Irish Republic is good enough for us, that it is a matter for them, that they are free to make their choice, and that we respect their freedom to do so.

Internal affairs are mentioned in the phrase of the Gracious Speech to which I previously referred. The words used are:

"widely acceptable arrangements for the devolution of power".

It is abvious that all democratic arrangements and structures have to be acceptable to a given majority, or, to put it in another way, to the greater number of people. But I trust that we can assume that the words "widely acceptable" do not in any way imply or suggest that any relatively small group or party has the right to veto the granting to the people of Northern Ireland of the same rights as are enjoyed by their fellow citizens in the rest of the United Kingdom. Who could object to that proposition? Were Her Majesty's Government to concentrate on that laudable objective, and were they to step off the treadmill of initiative after initiative, much good would follow.

The latest example of what not to do is the current Anglo-Irish discussions. It has been one of the longest running ventures. Although it is believed by some that the talks began about 10 months ago, the initiative dates back to at least early 1982. In that year, one of the designers of the project was good enough to reveal that the next time they would have to be much more devious—that was the word used by a person in high places — than in certain other ill-fated experiments, in the hope that the majority of people in Northern Ireland would not spot the hidden traps. I am not quite as naive as that person would appear to think.

The initiative, dating from January 1982, was interrupted for six short weeks after the Prime Minister's realistic response to questions on the evening of the last Anglo-Irish summit in November 1984. Much criticism has already been heaped on the head of the Prime Minister by some speakers in the debate. She has been accused of choosing presentational options rather than solid proposals for legislation. I would not fault the Prime Minister on her

presentation in November 1984, because it achieved something that was very important — stability in Northern Ireland.

Unionists, Nationalists, Catholics and Protestants said to themselves, "At least we now know where we stand. There is no point in haggling and squabbling over something that is not going to happen. Let us get on with working together and living together." That was one of the great achievements of the Prime Minister's presentation, and if she would keep up that good work I would find no fault with her. But there were those, even at that time, in the governmental machine—I use that term deliberately —who resented her words to a greater extent than they were resented by the Dublin Government. By the end of the six weeks the tram had been put back on the rails, and it has trundled along ever since, jumping the points occasionally, but still lurching in the same general direction.

It would be a gross understatement to say that all the attendant suspense and suspicion have seriously damaged confidence, and nowhere is that truth more evident than in the economic and employment fields. The Gracious Speech concludes its reference to Northern Ireland with the stated intention

"to create and sustain employment".

The present Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has rightly declared that those aims can be achieved only if stability is restored. Only yesterday the Northern Ireland Economic Council advised, or warned, him that on present form the situation will get worse, not better, in an economic sense. What else could one expect, given the present political and constitutional uncertainty?

That uncertainty will be increased if Her Majesty's Government yield to the pressure to establish a structure to give any foreign nation a role in administering or governing Northern Ireland — a device which would demolish completely any written or verbal assurance that the status of Northern Ireland would not be affected. It would be clear to anyone with any common sense that the act of setting up a structure, with a permanent secretariat, was a clear contradiction of all the earlier assurances. Any such device would have a disastrous effect on the Northern Ireland economy, on security and, worst of all, on relations between the two sides of the Northern Ireland community. The effect, dare I say, would be utterly devastating for the political parties upon which so much will depend in the future.

4.55 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I should like to follow the lines on which the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), the leader of the Official Unionist party, has spoken.

I say to the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Spence), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Agriculture, of which I am also a member, that I, too, will not be in the same Lobby as him when we vote on the Bill dealing with Sunday trading. The laws for the protection of employees, and for those who have religious convictions, should not be swept away. They should be retained for the people who need protection and the benefit of one day's rest in the week, whatever their religious persuasions may be. I do not agree with the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) that Scotland has altogether apostasised. In the land of John Knox there are still some who respect, honour and attend the kirk.

My purpose in speaking is to tell the House what the majority of the people of Northern Ireland are thinking at this time. It is as well that this House should know what they are thinking. As we meet here, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of the Irish Republic are locked in talks with representatives of Her Majesty's Government. Talks between Governments are supposed to be confidential, and everyone recognises that they should be, but the present talks are confidential only in relation to the majority population in Northern Ireland. The spokesman of the SDLP—which is represented in this House by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume)—said that the Dublin Government were having consultations with leaders of his party at every stage of the negotiations. Therefore, one section of the population of Northern Ireland knows exactly what is taking place and is making recommendations accordingly.

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary of the Republic of Ireland have been making tours to various foreign places. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has been briefed, as has the President of the United States, and Mr. Barry even went to the Vatican to let the Pope know what was happening. Yet the majority of the population of Northern Ireland, who will be most concerned with the outcome of the talks, have not been told what is happening. For that reason, a serious position is developing in Northern Ireland.

I hope that the long-awaited summit will soon take place and that matters will then be out in the open, as far as that is possible. I do not believe that the people of Northern Ireland will hear everything that has taken place. I do not believe that the declaration will tell us everything that has been agreed. But at least we shall see the tip of the iceberg and know what is to take place.

One point has been established through Dublin—that the aim of the Government of the Irish Republic is to set up a permanent joint secretariat, chaired by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland with a co-chairman, the Foreign Minister of the Irish Republic. It has been suggested that, because he will be answerable in the Dail for what takes place in the joint secretariat, the Dublin Government may appoint a Minister for Northern Ireland to answer the deliberations, recommendations, discussions and actions of that joint secretariat. I ask the House to note the effects of that. At present, when legislation is proposed for Northern Ireland, the elected representatives of both sections of the people make their wishes known at Council level and in the House. Ordinary lobbying takes place, the views of each section of the community are made known to the Government, and the appropriate Minister then takes his decision. Although both sections of the community in Northern Ireland have clearly elected representatives to do the job for them, it appears that in future all legislation and administration will be referred to a new body, and that, after that body has had its say, the proposals will come to the House.

No one doubts—the Government have reiterated this —that the House will continue to deal with legislation for Northern Ireland. But how will legislation be produced? Will it be produced as all legislation in the House is produced, or will it be referred to the joint secretariat, in which we will have representations from a foreign Government who have not looked in a friendly way on the people of Northern Ireland or their wish to remain

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

part and parcel of the United Kingdom? It should also be emphasised that article 2 of the constitution of the Republic of Ireland reads:

"The national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and territorial sea."

That is a strong claim. That foreign Government, through their new role, will have a definite input in all laws, administration and jurisdiction over part of the United Kingdom. The way in which Northern Ireland is governed will therefore be radically changed, and the constitutional structures of government in Northern Ireland will be changed. If that is so, the people of Northern Ireland have a right to decide on the matter. The House will know that in the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 the law of the land states that if there is to be a change, it cannot be made without the people of Northern Ireland expressing a wish for that change.

Hon. Members will remember what happened in the House when the constitutional arrangemens of Scotland and Wales were to be changed. The people of those two parts of the United Kingdom had an opportunity through a referendum to express their wishes. We are telling the Government today, as the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley and I told the Prime Minister recently, that, because of their proposed change and the different way in which the constitutional structures of Northern Ireland will work, the people of Northern Ireland must have an opportunity to express their wishes. If we do not have such a constitutional expression of view and the rule of the ballot, we shall find ourselves in serious difficulties—and let no hon. Member think that those difficulties can be overcome, because they cannot.

Many years ago, when I first came to the House, hon. Members thought that in doing away with the old Stormont all would be well, but I warned them that the House would have to reap what it had sown. Today the House should think carefully about putting its hands to creating a structure in Northern Ireland in which the Irish Republic will have a genuine say—a consultative role and a right to be consulted about the affairs of the people of Northern Ireland.

The House should consider the record of the South. If there is one body in Northern Ireland that should be commended, it is the judiciary. Our judges and magistrates have stood the test. They come from both sides of the community, and some from both sides have been slaughtered. Indeed, one magistrate saw his daughter murdered beside him as he left his Roman Catholic place of worship after attending mass. The members of the judiciary have carried out the administration of the laws passed by the House in the face of great danger to themselves and their families. Yet no body has been more savagely attacked by the Foreign Secretary of the Government in the South than the Northern Ireland judiciary. He has said that the judiciary must be changed and that people cannot give their consent to it. Yet the only failure of those men was faithfully to administer the laws passed by the House. Will those attacks be considered by a structure, in which the South will have a legislative role, under the new proposals? Will the South be able to attack the judiciary of the North through that structure?

What about the security forces in Northern Ireland, who bear the brunt and heat of the battle? When members of the IRA, who rebel, murder and carry out crimes, are about to be arrested by the Army, they stretch out their hands and say that they would rather be arrested by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. They plead not to be arrested by the British Army. Yet the RUC has come under serious criticism and denunciation. We all know that in any body of men some will deviate from the rule, but that does not mean that the whole body should be condemned.

Today the Prime Minister read a homily to the Opposition about supporting law and order, and Opposition spokesmen said that her accusations were groundless and should not be made. But in Northern Ireland the SDLP openly declares that it will not associate with the police force or invite its people to join the police or any of the security forces. That is what we are up against. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) said that if certain people were recruited into the police force, many problems would be cured. The old RUC allocated one third of its places to the Roman Catholic commumity, and many Roman Catholics were members of it, but that did not alter the antagonism that the force faced while it tried to keep the writ of the Queen's peace.

The suggestion that is being made is creating a serious situation in Northern Ireland. I do not know what the Government's other policies will be. I can only learn from what is leaked from Dublin and said by those who are party to the discussions. Like all free peoples, the people of Northern Ireland claim the right to declare their wishes about a change in the constitutional structure of government. That right, as I have already mentioned, has been upheld by the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973. That Act purports to guarantee Northern Ireland's place within this kingdom, and permits change only with the consent of the people of Northern Ireland by voting in a poll.

When the miners' strike was taking place, the Prime Minister was adamant in saying that Mr. Scargill should hold a poll. We heard that continually. The Prime Minister should hold a poll in Northern Ireland. The people should have a right to say whether they are to be governed in this manner. It is entirely different from any other part of the United Kingdom.

I shall give an example. If France claimed Cornwall, what would the House think if the Government said that they would set up a secretariat and run Cornwall as a condominium, as a covert joint authority? There would be a great outcry in the House. If there was a group of determined terrorists in Cornwall who were bombing, killing and maiming, the outcry in the House would be even greater. Yet in Northern Ireland the bombing and the maiming of our citizens go on and the Government are negotiating with the Republic along those lines.

What is more, I find it difficult to understand why yesterday, when addressing the East Belfast rotary club, the Secretary of State spoke about the minority and its fears. I know what the fears of the minority are. I represent a sizeable section of the minority in my constituency. Anybody who looks at the figures will see the swing that has taken place in the vote since I went to that constituency. There are real fears not only in the minority community but in the majority population. The Secretary of State sneered at those fears yesterday and talked about phobias and things brought out of the cupboard. He should recognise that a serious state of affairs is developing in Northern Ireland, and the sooner it comes to a head the better it will be for everyone.

I trust that when the House hears those proposals and the representations that will be made by members of the Unionist parties in the House, it will know exactly what the majority of the people are thinking. We in Northern Ireland are thinking of our founding father, who was a very eminent Member of this House. He served in the British Government and also in the inner Cabinet of the world war 1 Government with the Liberals. Many years ago, in a statement that sums up what Ulster is saying today, he said:

"Our demand is a very simple one. We ask for no privileges, but we are determined that no one shall have privileges over us. We ask for no special rights, but we claim the same rights from the same Government as every other part of the United Kingdom. We ask for nothing more; we will take nothing less. It is our inalienable right as citizens of the United Kingdom, and heaven help the man who tries to take it from us".

That is the determination of the people of Northern Ireland. They want to maintain and have equal rights for every citizen in the land firmly within this kingdom.

5.14 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): There is one respect in which I would confirm the statement made by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), and that is that Sunday opening in Scotland, certainly in my constituency, does not stop either Catholics or Protestants from going to church, and I do not think anything would. I would not presume to dictate to the rest of the United Kingdom what it should do, and it is up to the House to consider carefully any proposals that would undermine the working practices and rights of shop workers. The Queen's Speech shows little of what is happening in the real world, out of sight of the glitter from the crown, and still less what the Government propose to do about it.

During the recess we witnessed remarkable developments in the Government's economic and industrial policy. First, the crest of the wave of destruction of Britain's manufacturing capacity has threatened to sweep away more of the steel industry, in particular Gartcosh works, with the threat that that carries to the viability of the great Ravenscraig works in my constituency, marking a further stepwise reduction in Britain's manufacturing capacity across the whole of the steel, motor, engineering and construction industries.

If that course of events unfolds it will end the steel industry in Scotland and wreak immense damage to present and prospective employment. There will be immense social distress, with the immediate loss of 10,000 or more jobs, coming on top of 25 per cent. male unemployment and 50 per cent. youth unemployment. That will be devastating and unthinkable. Secondly, while the crest of that wave of destruction has crashed on its destructive course, it has hit the beach, and a sharp undertow has reversed the underlying direction of Government policy.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his Mansion House speech, announced — or rather confirmed, because his actions had already spoken for him—that money supply was no longer to be the holy grail that will bring down inflation. The attempt to hit money supply targets has had a disastrous effect since 1980 and 1981. The excessively tight monetary policy that we have suffered, and the change in expectations that that engendered have forced up the exchange rate and destroyed Britain's industrial competitiveness by a rise of 40 per cent. in United Kingdom manufacturing unit labour costs relative to Germany. The money supply targets were missed, and inflation fell no lower than that of our industrial competitors, but the damage had already been done to industry.

Having inadvertently flattened manufacturing industry, the Government have now turned their attention to the indicator which warned of the real trouble — the exchange rate. The Chancellor told us in his Mansion House speech that that is now to be the principal intermediate target. It is an intellectual volte face and an admission of political failure of quite staggering proportions, the more dangerous to the Government because it is hidden in the mists of economic principle which the Government are meant to understand. Is the exchange rate to be treated as the warning light to keep industry and inflation flat, or is it to be treated as a beacon that will allow industry to pick itself up and advance again?

Unit labour costs in the United Kingdom relative to Germany stand almost at their 1981 peak. If the deutschmark is kept at around its present level, industry will continue to suffer. Is the intention of the Group of Five simply to bring down the dollar relative to the yen, to relieve the trade imbalance between the United States and Japan, with Britain and Europe left in the middle? Or is the Chancellor intending to bring down the pound, at least part of the way with the dollar, to make it more competitive with the deutschmark? On such questions hangs the industrial future of this country. There is nothing about that in the Queen's Speech.

The Chancellor wants to hold down inflation and appears to believe that it will be best achieved by holding the exchange rate index for sterling at its present level. So the implications for the deutschmark depend on what happens to the dollar and the yen. That is not good enough. But at least at the macro-economic level the Government are now talking about the factors that do influence competitiveness.

The full arguments on the future of Gartcosh must be deployed when we have all the evidence available, when we have the report of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, with a full debate on Gartcosh on a motion on which the House will be required to vote. The shop stewards, the work force, and everyone concerned with the future of the steel industry in Scotland—that is just about everybody north of the border—have been vocal and articulate in putting forward the case against closure. That case should be fully tested against the facts, which we have not been told. It is essential that the full case that the British Steel Corporation is seeking to make should be presented to this House.

The sea change to which I referred in the underlying principles of the Government's economic policy has not yet sunk in at the industrial level, up to and including the meeting of the Steel Council last week. European steel policy has not even questioned the effects of exchange rates on United Kingdom competitiveness and the prospects for United Kingdom industrial recovery. The defeatism and pessimism so evident at the top levels in the British Steel Corporation are spread far wider throughout British industry. BSC has no difficulty in obtaining pessimistic views from its customers on the prospects for industrial recovery in general and on steel demand in particular.

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

The European Commission strategy document "General Objectives Steel 1990" offers just one economic scenario—a macro-economic forecast presented from its Comet models. The assumptions about United Kingdom competitiveness and exchange rates are not stated, but they are broadly that the present exchange rate with the deutschmark and relative competitiveness with Germany should continue. The officials who prepared that forecast were not even asked to examine the effects of different sterling-deutschmark exchange rates. They told me last week that the Comet models which they used would have shown, as one might expect, increased United Kingdom production and exports and reduced imports from a lower pound with slightly higher inflation in a reasonably harmonious scenario with lower United Kingdom interest rates.

There was no such testing of the scenario against which the whole future of the steel industry in Britain, and particularly in Scotland, is being judged. None of this was examined or questioned by the British Steel Corporation or by the Department of Trade and Industry. The practical effect is that the opportunities and prospects for recovery in British manufacturing industry and in steel and steel-using industries are being gravely underestimated by the Government and by the British Steel Corporation.

The cold rolling and finishing mill for the Ravenscraig works is at Gartcosh. The BSC case for closing Gartcosh is based on demand forecasts consistent with the pessimistic scenario painted by the European Commission. Short-term cost savings are claimed from the closure of Gartcosh and the diversion of its order book to Port Talbot, Llanwern and Shotton.

In the assumed scenario, the coporation as a whole becomes more profitable. The Government have insisted that Ravenseraig should remain open for three years, which will take us past the next general election. The widely held view in Scotland is that Ravenscraig is being set up for closure. The only investment that it is receiving is the cheapest way of keeping it going for three years, whereas Port Talbot and Llanwern are rightly getting long-term investment. If the Government's intentions towards Ravenscraig are to be tested, we must see whether in three years' time Ravenscraig has a better or worse chance of being viable without Gartcosh.

Under the British Steel Corporation's chosen scenario, the cold mills in the corporation will be more heavily loaded than the upstream steel-making and hot mills. Substantial reserve steel-making capacity at Port Talbot and Llanwern can be brought into production with relatively little further investment. As the closure of Gartcosh tilts the imbalance of investment still more heavily towards the heavy steel-making end rather than the finishing end, the prima facie judgment must be that the future of Ravenscraig is being severely prejudiced, if not foreclosed, by the proposal to close Gartcosh. The BSC has presented no evidence or argument to the contary.

Political statements from the corporation that even to ask questions about the future of Ravenscraig is to undermine its chances of survival are obscurantist rubbish. When I drafted a detailed questionnaire to the corporation seeking the information necessary to form a judgment about the future of Ravenscraig with and without Gartcosh, the chairman of the corporation refused to reply to it, on the ground that it raised questions about strip product group strategy in the corporation generally and not just about Gartcosh works. As Gartcosh produces the same products and sells in the same markets as other cold strip mills and the BSC has repeatedly emphasised that none of these works can be seen in isolation, it is precisely the product group strategy that must be questioned.

The Select Committee on Scottish Affairs has now required the BSC to reply to that questionnaire, so we should get the necessary facts on costs, capacities and efficiencies. These will then have to be analysed in the light of alternative demand scenarios. There are plainly scenarios which would justify the retention of Gartcosh and of a viable steel industry in Scotland. Ultimately, it will be a matter of judgment as to the balance of probabilities, and of the policies required. That is a judgment which this House must make after the Government have carried full responsibility for ensuring that the House is fully informed of the arguments and their implications.

If manufacturing industry is to make its essential contribution to the future of Britain, industries such as electronics and biotechnology are essential, but they can play only a relatively small part by comparison with the established industries. Engineering, vehicles and steel still have an essential part to play in Britain's industrial recovery. The House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade and the recent analysis in the Bank of England quarterly bulletin show the very limited contribution that can be made by services either to employment or to the balance of payments as North sea oil runs out. The way ahead for economic recovery in this country must be found in manufacturing industry. We are witnessing within manufacturing industry a crucial test of the Government's self-confidence in whether or not they will allow the closure of Gartcosh to go ahead.

5.28 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I welcome many parts of the Queen's Speech and especially endorse the proposals for tougher legislation against riotous assemblies. The powers of the police need to be strengthened. I was delighted at the way in which the Prime Minister called on the nation to stand four square behind our police forces in the difficult role that they have had to play in recent months, particularly in the inner city riots.

I am encouraged by the presence of the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), to say how glad I am that the Government are apparently going ahead with the Okehampton bypass Bill. I believe that it is an open secret in the House that the Government intend to introduce such a measure, and I hope that it will have the backing not just of this House but of another place, in view of the importance of that bypass to the south-west of England, to west Devon and to the whole of Cornwall. One of the problems faced by the county of Cornwall is the communications bottleneck caused by the awful state of the A30. If ever a road needed to be built quickly, it is the Okehampton bypass. I ask hon. Members in this House and in another place who have sincere doubts, based on a misconception of the facts about that Bill and the effects of the proposed road on the Dartmoor national park, to look at the map and see how the proposed bypass will just clip the edge of Dartmoor national park. It is the best route in environmental terms.

I have reservations about one aspect of the Queen's Speech which has already been mentioned today—the Government's intention to legislate on Sunday shopping hours. This will come as no surprise to the Whips, because I was one of those Conservative Members who voted against the proposals that were put to the House earlier in the year. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister rightly spoke of the importance of choice. Choice is important. I do not see why we necessarily need a uniform approach to the subject. What might be right in the suburbs of Greater London or the midlands could be wrong in areas such as the far west of Cornwall which I represent. I do not see anything wrong with letting localities decide whether they want shops open. I urge my right hon. Friend to look again at this proposal. The arguments that I have heard developed since the House debated this subject have not changed my views.

I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss the crisis which is facing Cornwall and, indeed, the whole of the tin industry. Thirteen days ago trading in tin on the London metal exchange was suddenly suspended. The decision cast a long shadow over the Cornish economy, especially those parts of Cornwall which still have tin mines, one of which, Geevor, is in my constituency. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade for seeing me about this issue. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) also attended that meeting. We urged my right hon. Friend to do everything he could to ensure that Britain took the lead in reopening talks in the International Tin Council. Those talks had already started when we met the Minister, but it was clear that they would not end in agreement. I am pleased to say that since then, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has taken the lead in reconvening the International Tin Council, and a meeting started earlier today. I hope that, at that meeting, there will be an attempt to achieve some stability in what is an international crisis.

However, what disturbs me is that, up to now, comment has been chiefly concerned with the consequences for the City and for the London metal exchange. These are extremely important matters, and I would not wish to belittle them, but what concerns me is the plight of the tin mines in Cornwall. I fear that their plight has been overlooked because of major financial considerations. My simple plea to the Government is not to overlook the tin industry in Cornwall. Ministers might be tempted to think that it is a somewhat insignificant industry in United Kingdom terms. It employs just over 1,500 people directly in Cornwall and the same again indirectly. It is vital to certain parts of Cornwall.

Geevor mine is a few miles from Land's End on the north coast of Cornwall. The remote area of St. Just and Pendeen is absolutely dependent on that tin mine, which employs over 300 people. It would be devastating for that area if that or any other tin mine in Cornwall were to close. Closure would have a serious impact on a region which already has very high unemployment.

I believe that tin mines have a strategic importance, because they are the only ones of their type in the whole of the European Community. If the talks in the International Tin Council do not stabilise the situation, the Government would be justified in giving special temporary assistance to enable them to withstand this temporary crisis. I am convinced that it is a temporary crisis brought about by the fluctuation in currencies and other factors which have complicated the international situation. Only a few months ago, the trading price of tin was over £10,000 a tonne. When trading was suspended, it was £8,000 and falling. Unless something is done, the price could drop to £4,000 a tonne. I hope that that never happens, because it would cast serious doubts on the viability of the mines in the short term. I am prepared to wager, however, that after a reasonable period the price of tin will go up again. It would be ridiculous if in the meantime, tin mines were to close, never to reopen. That must not be allowed to happen. I am aware of the difficulties facing the Government, but my hon. Friends and I will do everything in our power to ensure that those mines have a chance to survive and that the mining communities are saved.

5.36 pm

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherlen): I also congratulate the mover and seconder of the motion. I do so heartily, because as you may recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the privilege of moving a similar motion more than 20 years ago. I feel for those who are given this responsibility, which they have discharged more than adequately today.

I was particularly interested in the comments of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre). He and I have served in this House for a long time and it was interesting to hear him say that there is very little industry in his constituency. We do not have very much in common but, sad to say, that is one thing that we have in common today. When I came to this House more than 20 years ago we had a great deal of industry in my constituency, but week by week, month by month, over the past few years the numbers of people in gainful employment have been dropping tragically.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone). We in Scotland have special problems and it is his responsibility, with other Scottish Conservative Members, to put Scotland's case, just as the Opposition do.

The most disappointing aspect of the Queen's Speech concerns employment. The Prime Minister and her colleagues have made a great deal of the fact that inflation is going down, but we must ask ourselves, "At what cost?" For the people of Scotland, the cost has meant that 400,000 of them are unemployed today—7,000 of them in my constituency.

One paragraph of the Queen's Speech was devoted to Scottish interests, and one half of that paragraph was devoted to salmon fishing. The House will not be surprised that, when I go back and tell my constituents that, there will not be any dancing in the streets of Rutherglen on Friday night. They will be very disappointed because they looked to the Gracious Speech to give them some hope.

The figures that I have quoted tell only half the story. We must look behind the figures which are quoted so readily to find the real evils of unemployment. In my constituency, scores of people over 40 years of age believe that they will never get a job again. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition said tht people reach a point at which they stop wanting to look for a job. Hundreds of people believe that, although they stand in queues and write letters, it is all to no purpose. If that is true of the over-forties, it is more so of the young in my constituency.

I have spoken before in the House about my youngsters in their twenties and their friends, who write letter after letter. Nothing is more soul-destroying than negative

[Mr. Gregor MacKenzie]

replies to young people looking for a job. They seek decent trades, decent apprenticeships and proper training. I was astonished, as I am sure were my Scottish colleagues, that a main point in the Prime Minister's speech today was that there had been so much training for young people. I do not know where that training is taking place, but it is certainly not in the west of Scotland. There is a crying demand for apprenticeships and proper training. It is a disgrace that young people are denied them.

Instead, we are chided by the Prime Minister. When we make speeches like this, we are told that we are moaning minnies. Such a description should not apply to hon. Members who complain or to the people whom they represent. It is our duty and obligation to come to the House and tell the Government what our constitutents think. They are angry with the Government because of unemployment and all the evils that go with it.

The people of Scotland and of other parts of the United Kingdom are a proud people. All that they ask is to be allowed to use their skills, talent and craftsmanship. They want to look after their families, to provide decent homes for them, to give their children a decent education and to look after their elderly relatives. However, they do not want to do that on a state handout. They want to care for them out of their earnings. They bitterly resent the fact that money coming into the country and oil revenues from the North sea are spent on supplementary benefit when they should be spent on regenerating industry in Scotland.

During the past three years, our older traditional industries have been almost decimated. Thousands of jobs have been lost in coal mining, steel making, shipbuilding and heavy engineering. In the past few years some of the newer industries such as car plants, aluminium smelting plants and paper mills have closed. Now we are saying that enough is enough. Even if private interests and nationalised industries are prepared to scuttle Scottish industry, we are not. We do not accept their attitude. We beg the Government to intervene in such malpractices.

Nowhere is the concern of Scottish people clearer than in the case of Gartcosh. My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) outlined our concern about Gartcosh, Ravenscraig and steel making in Scotland. No doubt during the next few days my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) will likewise put their case. In the years that I have been in the House, I cannot think of an issue which has so united the people of Scotland. The trade unions, the chambers of commerce, regional councils, district councils and hon. Members of all parties are agreed. Only one Conservative Member, who is regarded as an eccentric, disagrees with the rest of us. The Government must pay attention, because in Scotland even the Tory party says that something must be done about steel making.

I was fascinated to read the other day that a lady Tory councillor in Stirlingshire advocated that Scottish Conservative ladies should come to London and chain themselves to the railings outside the British Steel Corporation's headquarters. When the Tory party ladies in Scotland tell the Government that they will chain themselves to the railings of the BSC, the Government should sit up and pay a wee bit of attention to their demands. To the people of Scotland—my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South agrees with this—Gartcosh has become a symbol. The earnestness of the Government to regenerate Scottish industry will be judged by their approach to this issue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South, my right and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East and others have been told that this is a matter for the day-to-day management of the British Steel Corporation. I have been an industrial Minister and I have no desire to interfere with the day-to-day management of the BSC or any other nationalised industry. However, this is not a day-to-day matter. The whole social and economic structure of Scotland is affected. It is too important a matter to be left to the chairman of the BSC and his colleagues on the board. They do not govern the country. They do not have the responsibility for regenerating industry or reducing unemployment and finding jobs for the people. This is a matter for Ministers. I hope that Ministers will not shuffle off their responsibility to the chairman of the BSC and others like him.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South said, there has already been far too much uncertainty about the future of the steel industry in Scotland. It is time for the uncertainty to be ended and to have a proper approach from the Government to get on with the business of making steel so that Scottish products can be sold in the United Kingdom and in Europe.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): Further decimation of the steel industry is taking place in my constituency. At the Clydesdale tube works the workers are working short time. On present reckoning, they will be idle for the three weeks before Christmas. At the same time, 7,000 tonnes of steel have come in from Italy to the Clydesdale works. The workers believe that management cannot forecast accurately; only a short time ago the workers were told that the order book was filled to capacity. We are now in a sad position.

Mr. MacKenzie: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I attended a meeting with my hon. Friend and others at which we were told that that works was an example to us all, that it had a full order book and that it was one of the best hopes for the future of the steel industry in Scotland.

My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South properly raised what is not just a constituency matter but a matter of national importance for Scotland—the future of Ravenscraig. I mentioned earlier that I believed it to be improper for Governments to shuffle off their responsibilities and put them on to the shoulders of the chairmen of boards of nationalised industries. It is within the recollection of all hon. Members that it was a political decision to establish Ravenscraig. It was set up by a Government headed by Harold Macmillan who, with his colleagues, realised the importance of the decision to establish Ravenscraig.

We are not only concerned about Ravenscraig, although, with Gartcosh, it is one of our major concerns. Whole communities in Glasgow and Lanarkshire will be affected. In moving the motion, the hon. Member for Hall Green stressed the importance of small firms in his constituency. Not dozens but scores of small firms depend heavily for their orders upon Gartcosh, Ravenscraig and the other steel plants in Scotland. If the Government are sincere about their small firms policy, I hope that Lord Young, the Secretary of State for Employment, will take

a personal interest in it and will discover the extent to which small firms are affected by the closure of steelworks throughout the United Kingdom.

I have stressed that Ravenscraig, Gartcosh and the associated small and medium-sized firms are our main concern, but we want Scotland to have its share of the newer industries. During the past 15 years we have had a fair share of the new electronic industries. I hope that we shall continue to attract them to all parts of the United Kingdom, not just to Scotland. I want these new industries to compete on equal terms with the Japanese and our European partners. To do so successfully, men and women need to be properly trained in these new and sophisticated skills. Their education and training start in our schools, universities and other centres of higher education.

That brings me to another major area of concern in Scotland—schooling. Tomorrow many teachers will be coming to Parliament from Scotland and other parts of the United Kingdom to express their concern about education. They will tell us about their conditions of service and about the conditions in their schools. I cannot think of a time when they have come to Parliament to tell right hon. and hon. Members not only about their pay and conditions but about the unprecedented action that they have been obliged to take. Later this month university teachers will be coming to tell us much the same story.

I have been a town councillor and a Member of Parliament for about 33 years. During that time I have been closely associated with education in the west of Scotland. I cannot easily think of a time when morale in the Scottish teaching profession has been as low as it is now. I hope that the Government will take seriously education and training. If, as we are told constantly, there is to be an upturn in trade and United Kingdom industries are to take off in the same way as those of some of our European partners, we shall need skilled young people. If we are to maintain our place as an industrial nation, that will have to happen. I hope that these matters will be considered seriously by the Scottish Office and by other Ministers. If they are not, we shall be unable to maintain our place as a great industrial nation.

5.56 pm

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I agree with the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie) that this country is in the middle of a third industrial revolution and that the pattern of industry is changing. As he said, we are moving towards microchip technology, and people must be trained to undertake that kind of work. It is no use trying to shore up old-fashioned industries such as steel. There is a world surplus of steel. It is difficult to estimate how much will be required. It is that kind of challenge with which we are faced. I agree with the right hon. Member for Rutherglen that unemployment is a source of concern for all hon. Members, but the Government are trying to reduce it.

It is quite right that the Gracious Speech should put defence first. I note that it says that the Government

"will continue to play a full and active part in the Atlantic Alliance and to enhance the United Kingdom's own defences."

This point was very well made in a recent debate, and I shall not bore the House with it. However, it is essential for this country to have adequate defences if an attack should be made upon it, and there must be sufficient personnel to man those key installations and to ensure that the enemy cannot infiltrate. Paragraph 4 of the Gracious Speech says:

"My Government will continue to work for progress in arms control".

Of course they must. However, that progress must be mutual and balanced, and provision must be made for full and comprehensive mutual inspection. That is very important.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister mentioned gas. One cannot, of course, provide for mutual inspection of gas, because this country does not have gas; only the Soviet Union has a stock of gas.

The Gracious Speech also refers to the Falkland islands and to the honouring of the undertakings given to the people of the Falkland islands. However, it does not mention sovereignty. This is a very important point. It must not be forgotten that there may be vast reserves in the whole of the south Atlantic which could be exploited.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that in most cases privatisation has been not only economic but has enabled this country to become a nation of shareholders. People have a share in the industries in which they work. This is just as important as being a householder. If people have a share in the industries in which they work, they realise that if those industries make a profit they will benefit. This is important not only from the national point of view but from the point of view of encouraging a sense of responsibility in individuals and a desire to co-operate with management in order to make industry profitable.

Napoleon said that we were a nation of shopkeepers, and he was right. Our small businesses must be given more freedom. One of my hon. Friends complained earlier about the burden of VAT, but the main problem facing small businesses is the innumerable number of forms that have to be filled in. A small business man finishes his week's work and then has to fill in all these forms. We need a simplified form of accounting, whether for income tax, VAT or anything else, which everybody can understand and deal with quickly so that valuable time is not wasted.

Reference is made in the Gracious Speech to social security. There is a crying need for legislation, because our social security system is so confused that no one knows who to go to and people do not know their rights. We need the new legislation that the Government are to introduce. The emphasis should be on the needy, and our NHS should not be in conflict with private practice, but should work in partnership for the good of the nation.

The two great issues facing the country are unemployment and law and order. We must consider the three important aspects of law and order—the law, its enforcement, and the punishment for breaking it. I have taken up the case of a woman constituent who has suffered because Hell's Angels have moved in next door to her. I will not describe what goes on in that house; hon. Members can imagine what happens. There is no law that can touch them.

We must support the police. Discipline starts in the school and the home and it must continue into respect for the police. If the police have to be given more powers, that must be accepted. I do not mind the police having water cannon. As long as they are given sufficient power and are not continually criticised, we shall be able to make progress.

[Dr. Alan Glyn]

Where is the punishment? People go before the courts and get practically no punishment. The law, its enforcement and punishment must be looked at carefully.

When the Hell's Angels moved into my constituency, we examined the law carefully because they were making life hell for Mrs. McSorley. We could find no way of catching them. If we go on like this, we shall find that the incidents that have occurred in various cities will get worse and will eventually spread. Now is the time to stamp out crime and violence. We must not wait until it overcomes us.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is to tackle drug abuse and drug trafficking, and I am sure that she will also tackle crime. If we do not tackle the problems of unemployment and crime, we shall be criticised heavily at the next election.

6.4 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I motored up from south Wales this morning, and as I crossed the Severn bridge at about 9 o'clock I noticed a tailback of about one mile on the Bristol side. I could see no impediment, apart from the hundreds of bollards to which we have grown accustomed over the years, and it seemed that the sole reason for the build-up of traffic was the fact that drivers had to queue to pay toll charges. That is inefficiency by any standards, because the Severn bridge is merely a stretch of the M4 and I believe that toll charges should be abolished on all our estuarial crossings. There is nothing about that in the Queen's Speech, but I hope that such a proposal will appear in a future Gracious Speech.

The Queen's Speech says:

"A Bill will be introduced to remove statutory restrictions on shop opening hours."

I do not wish to appear sanctimonious, but we have all been brought up in a country with a Christian tradition and we all understand that Sunday is essentially different. Apart from any moral considerations, I believe that we all benefit mentally and physically because Sunday is different from the other six days of the week.

Some tidying up of the law may be required, but I do not wish to see anything more drastic. I would not complain if small food shops were allowed to open until midday; there is an abvious need to be able to buy newspapers on Sunday; and perhaps people could visit garden centres. However, I feel that only such minor modifications should be made.

I do not wish to go into Newport on a Sunday and find all the chain stores open in the main street. Apart from being an infringement of the tradition of Sunday, it is likely to lead to further exploitation of labour. We know that wages in the retail trade are already notoriously low. I hope that the Government will reconsider their proposal.

The Queen's Speech says:

"Measures will be introduced to permit the transfer of the assets of the British Gas Corporation to the private sector".

The gas industry is a highly profitable, publicly owned industry and it should remain so. Last year it contributed to the Exchequer £350 million in profits and the same amount in taxation. That is a substantial sum.

The Government allegedly oppose Government interference in industry, but they have imposed gas price increases of 10 per cent. more than the rate of inflation over the past three years. They have added £4 billion to the nation's gas bills. Many less well-off families are being badly hit by those unnecessary, Government-imposed increases.

British Gas is a monopoly, and that is a vital reason why it should remain in public hands.

In the last week we have witnessed events at British Telecom, also a monopoly service supplier and now in private hands. Despite the astronomical profits, savage increases have been imposed upon ordinary domestic users. There is no evidence that gas consumers will be better off as a result of the sale of the British Gas Corporation.

Selling British Gas is equivalent to selling the silver: it can be done only once. Fantastic amounts of revenue will be raised. Estimates range from £5 billion to £8 billion. We all criticise British Gas from time to time—I have done so myself—but it has an unrivalled record for safely and for efficiently providing the nation with heat and energy.

The real reason for the Government's proposal is a little sordid. For a long time the Government have been half promising tax handouts. Because of the failure of the Government's economic policies, they have not been able to deliver. With the sale of British Gas, the Chancellor will be able to make tax concessions which will benefit the better-off. One could say that the Government are attempting to buy the result of the next general election.

The billions of pounds raised to purchase British Gas will detract from the vast sums which should be going into British manufacturing industry. Only through investment in existing industry and the creation of new industries will we be able to put our people back to work. For the millions who now stand in the dole queues there seems to be no hope. The House of Lords Select Committee realised that in its report. The Committee investigated the deteriorating balance of trade in manufacturing industry. It is a doom-laden report which points to a further contraction of manufacturing industry. It says that there will be a deterioration in the balance of payments and that deflationary measures will be needed. When deflationary measures are taken by any Government, ordinary families suffer most.

The report says that higher unemployment is likely as the oil resources run out. Heaven knows, the unemployment figures are horrific enough. The report predicts economic stagnation and inflation and a decline in the exchange rate when North sea oil runs out. It states:

"The effect will be to pose a grave threat to the standard of living and to the economic and political stability of the nation."

The Government should be seriously concerned about that report. In a nutshell, it says that the economic policies pursued over the last six and a half years have failed catastrophically. The Conservatives should make way for a Government who are prepared to make putting Britain back to work their central objective.

6.14 pm

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): I was delighted that the Gracious Speech began with a welcome to the Amir of Qatar who will be coming here shortly. In an all-party delegation I had the privilege of visiting Qatar last month. The visit was relevant to some of the speeches made today. One of the reasons for the visit was to study industrial development in that Gulf state. I had an unpleasant shock when we visited the Qatar steel plant, an exact copy of the Hunterston plant. The plant was hardly

operating because of a glut of product and was making only reinforcing material. The steel industry is relevant to everything in the Gracious Speech.

I welcome the Gracious Speech warmly, particularly after listening to the Prime Minister's speech. When I first read the speech, I was worried that we were perhaps allowing a reform of the rating system to slip out of sight. I was delighted that the Prime Minister corrected that omission.

I was sorry to find no mention of any legislative response to the Warnock report. I had hoped that something would be done in this Session to put some teeth into that report.

On a minor issue, I am delighted that the speech contains no reference to dog licences. I hope that they will disappear for ever. The best thing that the Government can do is to abolish the whole nonsense of dog licences. Perhaps I shall have an opportunity on another occasion of arguing that case with my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Unlike the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), I welcome the moves towards privatisation. I remember well my maiden speech in the House almost exactly 21 years ago. I was fresh from Steel house and the Iron and Steel Federation. I spoke on the Queen's Speech which carried proposals to nationalise the steel industry. Labour Members cheerfully believed that that was a commanding height and that all British industry's problems would evaporate once Ministers had control over that great industry. The story of the steel industry's nationalisation is not happy.

I recall when in 1972 the Secretary of State proposed investment plans for a greatly enhanced industry. People questioned whether 35 million tonnes would be enough. We now know the facts—and what a sad and sorry state the industry is in.

I am glad that we are moving away from the belief that political control of an industry is a panacea and a cure-all for problems. If my arithmetic is correct, by the time that this Parliament draws to an end about 40 per cent. of the state assets which existed in 1979 will have been returned to private ownership. The ratchet will be in the opposite direction.

I am concerned about that section of the Gracious Speech which states:

> "Within the framework of firm monetary and fiscal policies designed to secure a continuing reduction in inflation, my Government will do all in their power to encourage the growth of new jobs."

Everyone in the House will agree with that objective. There is no doubt that for the sixth year the economy is continuing to grow, but it is not growing in an even pattern. Many areas of the economy are still deep in recession or falling behind.

I listened with interest to the speeches of the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) and the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie), who spoke about the sterling exchange rate as though it was some piece of arithmetic that could be thrown to one side while we got on with the real job of running Britain's economy. I do not share that attitude. I regard the exchange rate as absolutely essential to the battle against inflation. If the exchange rate ever got into the situation that faced us a year ago, inflation would climb to record levels even higher than those under the Labour Government. We could then say goodbye to Britain as a nation able to compete anywhere in the world. I do not regard the exchange rate as a trifle which we can dispense with.

Dr. Bray: I am delighted to hear the hon. Gentleman's sentiments, but I think that he must have misunderstood the Chancellor for the past six years. It is the Chancellor who has ignored the exchange rate but who has now undergone a Damascene conversion and is saying that it must be his principal target.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: We must beg to differ. I hold the view—whether or not the Chancellor does—that the exchange rate is central to our economic performance. Although I understand the desire of the CBI and others for lower interest rates, I recognise that, against the background of a falling oil price, and with Britain, for whatever reason, regarded as having a petrocurrency, if interest rates were precipitously reduced there would be a substantial fall in the exchange rate, resulting in an increase in inflation. While I have sympathy with the CBI, I ask it to bear in mind the fact that without interest rates, and against a falling oil price, we have nothing with which to underpin our currency, and that creates problems for expanding the economy.

While encouraging the growth of new jobs, we must ask how that should be done. It is essential to analyse the causes of unemployment and what it is about. It is not a simple position that can be described in one or two words. Unemployment is the product of three factors: first, the world recession, from which some industries are emerging, while others are still in its depths; secondly, the advance of technology; thirdly, and inevitably, the fact that many trade union leaders have priced their members out of jobs by asking for unreasonable wage settlements. There have been examples of that during the past few years, but also a recognition by some union members that they were being led by false prophets.

We want the unemployment figures to come down. We want to ensure that young people have an opportunity of job experience so that they can build a life for themselves where work is not, as the Leader of the Opposition suggested, something that they are no longer interested in seeking. I make a plea to my right hon. Friends to ensure that the youth training scheme does not suffer from lack of funds. In Hampshire, the YTS relies on a number of resources from different quarters. I urge my right hon. Friends to ensure that, when approached by county councils for funds to operate the scheme effectively, they do not deny them those funds. The scheme is efficient and good and those taking part in it obtain genuine benefits. It would be a tragedy if it had to be curtailed as a result of a Treasury diktat that rendered funds unavailable.

I hope that the Government will reconsider their attitude towards local authorities spending their own money. That is not an extension of public borrowing; it is an extension of good infrastructure. To pennypinch today is to ensure disaster tomorrow; to spend wisely today is to be sure of a good infrastructure tomorrow. We must differentiate between the councils that have funds from the sale of council houses and those with funds from other sources. It is absolutely essential that some freeing of those funds is introduced quickly. In the absence of that, we are building up real trouble for ourselves in the future and the job of reconstruction will be that much harder.

I am not one of those who believe that the future of Britain lies on the back of a microchip. I am quite

[Mr. McNair-Wilson]

convinced that the microchip and all advancing technology are of the greatest importance. I also recognise that if we want to create more employment on the British Leyland Metro line, we must take out all the robot welders and put back the workers with torches. I ask the Government seriously to consider the problem that many heavy industries are now not only in recession, but are being competed against unfairly by some of our so-called colleagues within the European Community.

The right hon. Member for Rutherglen mentioned Italy. The Italians are a good example of unfair competition. They tinker with their energy costs in an unacceptable manner. They allow the British steel industry to be cut to pieces, yet do not take the same action with their own. We have heard examples tonight of products being imported at prices that we cannot match. Yet we have one advantage not held by any other European country, not even Japan: we have a four-fuel economy in abundance. We have coal, gas, oil and nuclear—the whole spread of cards. If the Government fail in their objectives, the blame can be laid at the feet of the accountants. Instead of playing those four cards and ensuring that energy is at the right price for our manufacturing industry, they are trying to balance each of the four and make the bottom line attractive.

I declare an interest because I work for a large user of electricity in Sheffield, making melting electrodes for the steel industry. Ringing in our ears still are the comments of the former chairman of the steel industry, Mr. MacGregor, that electric melting in this country will never make sense because of the cost of electricity. Having switched from steel to coal, he still recognises that problem.

The plant in Sheffield spends £6 million on electricity. It makes products identical to those made by a similar plant in Calais, on the other side of the Channel, where the cost of electricity is 50 per cent. less. I know all the reasons for that, and my hon. Friends can, if they wish, explain about nuclear power in France and so on. I understand all that. We must introduce real differentials for the big electricity users. I know that there is talk between the Department of Energy and others about bulk tariffs, but if that means differentials in price on an interruptible basis that will not be acceptable. We have had that before—indeed, we have it now. To put it simply, it means that when cooking in an oven we are at risk not only of damaging what we are cooking but of damaging the oven. I want a real differential, and that can be brought about only by Government action. Under the statute of nationalisation, the CEGB and Electricity Council must supply all customers on an even-handed basis. Until that statute is changed, we shall be having these arguments time and again and no fundamental action will be taken.

Imagine that we were able to get the real differentials that I have in mind. Then we would see auto strip produced more cheaply, slabs and billets, better car business and, dare we hope, better shipbuilding business, and other areas of manufacturing industry would benefit. If we do not do something along those lines, we shall sink.

I support what the Prime Minister said when addressing the Conservative party conference. Across-the-board random reflation would lead us back into the problems of a weak exchange rate, increasing inflation and the other difficulties to which I have referred. However, in my view, that does not mean that we should do nothing and sit on our hands, watching other countries taking us to the cleaners. It means that we must use the cards in our hand and play them really strongly, and energy is the best of those cards.

It is a tragedy that, although we are one of the biggest oil producers in the world—a miracle resource which those coming into the House with me in 1964 never even believed would exist; people said that there was no oil in the North Sea, and we were getting excited about the availability of gas—we are being beaten to the post by countries which have no energy resources of their own. That must be wrong.

If the Queen's Speech means what it says, as I pray it does, it must also mean that the Government will use the selective encouragements, the innovation, available to us to get manufacturing industry in Britain going again.

6.32 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): It is a pleasure to speak following the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson), particularly as I share some of the views that he expressed. Certainly I share the view of the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn), who is not at present in his place, that two major problems facing the nation are unemployment and crime.

The Gracious Speech says that the

"Government will do all in their power to encourage the growth of new jobs."

I hope that those are not just words, and that the Government proposal is not designed to relate only to the southern half of the country. As hon. Members are aware, I am familiar with west Yorkshire, which has always been coal mining dominated. Indeed, that industry has in the past created a significant proportion of the economy of west Yorkshire. Two decades ago there were 40,000 miners in west Yorkshire. By 1984, there were fewer than 20,000.

As the rundown of the coal industry took place over those years most of the people were able to be transferred into jobs in other sectors, but the position has changed greatly of late. Now, in west Yorkshire alone, 5,000 jobs have been lost since the end of the miners' strike and it is expected that, with the introduction of new technolgy, the present number of mining jobs in west Yorkshire will be reduced by 74 per cent.

The problem is not confined to west Yorkshire generally, but is spread among black spots in the mining communities. For example, the Castleford travel-to-work area is at present showing an unemployment rate of 14·2 per cent., but, as I shall show, that figure is a fiddle. There are 8,247 people unemployed in the Castleford travel-to-work area, with only 291 vacancies being shown. The unemployment total, however, is incorrect, because miners who have been redundant for more than 12 months are not shown on the unemployment register.

Those men are nevertheless unemployed. I concede that they are protected by redundancy payments, but it is not satisfactory to tell a man aged, say, 50, "We do not expect you to be employed again, so you will not be able to sign for the dole between the ages of 50 and 65." Although it is perhaps incorrect to say that they cannot register, they feel that there is no point — as they are receiving redundancy payments—after 12 months in continuing to register, because there will be no possibility of a job for them.

The situation in Castleford is fogged by the Government's policy of creating boundaries of travel-to-work areas in such a way as to provide either grant entitlement or no entitlement under the intermediate area status. Although I do not have the figures broken down for Castleford—because they are not available—it is clear that in that area alone there are black spots with unemployment reaching 20 to 22 per cent. However, 42 per cent. of those people are under 24 years old. Despite that, not one youth under 18 is on any of the collieries' books and, apart from the odd apprentice here or there, no youths under 18 have been employed by collieries in my constituency since 1983.

As a result of pits closing, partially closing or being threatened with closure, the local economy has lost £43·5 million a year in wages. Such a loss to a small community such as Castleford has had enormous repercussions. Collieries such as Ackton Hall—that was not on the hit list before the strike—Savile, Ledston, Glasshoughton and Fryston are, I understand, due to be hit shortly.

In addition, there have been other job losses in the last three years, including in the glass and container industries and confectionery. They have mounted up to represent a loss in wages to the local economy of £87 million. Reduce that by £24 million paid in unemployment benefit, and Castleford has suffered a total loss of £63 million in wages.

The local chamber of trade said during the miners' strike that if the strike continued the area would have lost 25 per cent. of its businesses. We are now reaching a point in Castleford's economy that is similar to that which existed when the strike was at its height, for the pits that were then on strike are now to be wiped out. This state of affairs cannot go on.

To my amazement, only last week the Pontefract health authority, carrying out Government policy, decided to privatise its domestic services. That will create 307 job losses among women domestics. To be fair, I blame not only the Government for that, because while that authority has been carrying out the Government's policy, it had no need to take the action in such great haste. Indeed, I do not excuse some colleague of my political persuasion on that authority for the action that has been taken. It is scandalous that in such an area we should decide to cut 307 jobs, mainly among ladies who are earning a pittance of £1·81 an hour for a 20-hour week. I deplore the action of the Pontefract area health authority.

I urge the Government to support a comprehensive package of measures for areas such as mine. They should include a long-term strategy for coal, and a decision to maintain the coal industry's share of electricity generation rather than to increase the costly bias towards nuclear power. The Government should support the CEGB to ensure that jobs are available in the coalfields. The Government, Mr. MacGregor and the coal board may feel at present:

"To the victor belong the spoils."

I believe that the pits are being run down too rapidly, causing great misery and upset in mining areas.

That is not causing misery at present for the men who have taken redundancy, because they are cushioned. It is causing misery to the young people who would normally have gone into the pit, but who now have no hope of doing so. The programme should be slowed down until alternative employment can be found for those youngsters.

Law and order has been mentioned. I have a report from the chairman-elect of the West Yorkshire police authority joint board. It states that there will be a reduction of £6·3 million in the amount of money allowed under the Home Office formula for standard requirements. That will mean a reduction in the West Yorkshire police force, which controls the big cities of Bradford and Leeds, of 430 police officers, 100 civilian staff and 15 per cent. of the vehicle fleet. If the authority has to follow the guidelines set down by the Department of the Environment, that reduction will be 1,300 police officers, 30 civilian staff and 50 per cent. in the number of police vehicles.

It appears that there are different standards. The authority is given a figure by the Home Office, but it is also told by the Department of the Environment that that figure must be much lower. If the authority exceeds the figure laid down by the Department of the Environment, it will be penalised in accordance with the Department's standards. The authority must reduce the services, or the Yorkshire ratepayers can expect a 70 per cent. rate increase in its precept for the police authority.

What are the authorities to do? Are we going to maintain law and order? Young people in the mining communities are not militant, whatever anyone may think. There is no hope for those mining communities. If the young people can see no hope, there will be social unrest. A few weeks ago the *Pontefract and Castleford Express* had headlines about a battle between youngsters in their early teens armed with knives and petrol bombs, on a local estate. If that type of behaviour develops, we shall need the police force to maintain law and order. The present formula for the financing of the police authority does not allow it to build up the force to the extent required by the Home Office, as the authority wants to do and is expected to do.

Finally, on the subject of housing, the Gracious Speech states:

"Legislation will be introduced to encourage the sale of public sector flats to their tenants, and wider private sector involvement in the ownership and management of council housing".

I do not know what that means, and I do not know whether anyone in the House does. I have always thought that council house tenants should have the right to buy their homes if they wish. Does that proposal mean that those council house tenants who have not bought their tenancies, for whatever reason—they could not afford to or did not want to — may have their tenancies sold to private landlords? Do the Government intend to solve the problem of the shocking conditions of some of the houses by throwing them to the private sector? The House will want to know the answers to those questions. The statement in the Gracious Speech leads us to believe that council houses that have not been sold to tenants will be sold to private landlords.

6.46 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I wish to deal with four topics—one general and three specific. I welcome the Government's consistent policy of remaining firmly committed to squeezing down inflation. We have the continuing human and social problem of those who seek work but cannot find it. Many hon. Members have spoken this afternoon about that problem from intimate knowledge and personal experience. It is a cancer, but the difficulty is not necessarily the same size as that shown by the present unemployment figures. I therefore welcome the more detailed analyses now under way, which are designed to show the varying categories of those on the

[Mr. Mark Wolfson]

unemployment register and to differentiate between those actively seeking jobs from those who, for a variety of reasons, are not.

I appreciate that some people will call that massaging the figures. The Leader of the Opposition had much to say on that subject. If such an analysis is done accurately, I believe that it is an entirely right and proper thing to do. An essential step towards finding a solution is to be certain of the problem. However, even when narrowed to a hard-core problem, unemployment is a social scourge of major proportions. Keynesian economics may be out of fashion, but I suggest to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench that the theories may not have been wrong; it was rather what politicians did with them for over 30 years that caused the problem.

Labour market rigidity, resistance to change, uncontrolled subsidies, neglect of the consumer and the market place, coupled with a continuing high level of Government spending, in boom as well as in recession, was where the theory and the practice fell apart.

The Government's continuing assault on those labour market rigidities, the privatisation programme and the emphasis on value for money in the Government's activities are having a profound effect. Privatisation increases consumer clout.

I ask the House to consider the change that has already taken place in British Telecom services. We probably all suffered from the new system here, but, in fairness, that appears to be sorting itself out, and overall the services of British Telecom are much more consumer-responsive than they were before privatisation or the threat of it.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Can the hon. Gentleman explain why this month there have been substantial price increases for the ordinary telephone subscriber? The commercial user, the big business with the big profits and the big reserves, will in large measure get the benefits. For most people who need the telephone as a service, the cost will be about 10 per cent. more. Is that a great and immediate benefit from privatisation for those such as myself who have no shares in British Telecom?

Mr. Wolfson: Like the hon. Gentleman, I have no shares in British Telecom, but the individual consumer is still getting a good service and proper value from British Telecom.

Deregulation, in addition, makes manufacturers and services respond to the market place, and I cite here the ending of the opticians' monopoly. That was an outstanding example of how new ranges and services immediately develop to meet consumer needs.

This is the fifth year of steady growth in the economy, and well above the European average, but that growth must be sustained. Without it, the new jobs will not develop, nor can the social services be properly financed. Therefore, I expected and welcomed the reference in the Gracious Speech to the intention of the Government to do all in their power to encourage the growth of new jobs.

There is the nub. There is some scope—more than is apparently accepted by Ministers—for public spending initiatives to stimulate job creation, not in the free-spending policies of the Labour Opposition, which can lead only to roaring inflation, higher taxation and unproductive industry all over again, but in strategically placed Government funding, which, in partnership with the private sector, can provide the impetus for further growth.

I argue that, in the freer labour market that we now have, and in the present context of far more realistic trade union membership — thanks to action taken by the Government — and with the Government committed to careful financial management, a larger public sector borrowing requirement need not necessarily lead to renewed inflation. After all, interest rates in Britain are more directly and immediately affected by United States interest rates than by the size of our own PSBR — provided that that PSBR remains within reasonable limits.

That brings me to my first specific point, which relates to expenditure on housing needs. If reports are true that the Secretary of State for the Environment is seeking to increase his budget for housing capital expenditure by £600 million, I wish to record my support for that priority. Housing improvement expenditure is of especial value. It provides jobs, it directly improves the lives of individuals, it is visible, and it is heartening. Under a Conservative Administration, it increasingly gives more and more people a stake in their own country and in their own local community through home ownership.

Improved housing and increased home ownership lie also at the core of our inner city problems. Those problems have to be tackled at three levels: policing, to protect the law-abiding and to apprehend the criminal; the creation of local jobs for local people; and the improvement of the whole inner city environment to make it a better place in which to live. I welcome the references in the Gracious Speech to those issues.

In Britain, in contrast to countries on the continent, the idealised home has often been a rural one. Over the years we have never paid enough attention to making city living as attractive as it can and should be. Planners and politicians alike have made appalling mistakes over the past 30 years, particularly in the building of tower blocks and soulless estates.

The first elderly lady housed in a tower block in the east end 25 or more years ago had her own view. She did not like where she was housed. She was lonely. She did not feel part of the community any more. But the planners did not listen and the politicians did not really listen. People said, "You have got modern amenities, you have got a fine view," but they did not listen to the cry of people that they felt isolated. Only now are we finally seeing sense as the worst blocks are demolished and people can live again in homes at or near ground level.

The housing disrepair problem is still large. The Government have taken active steps to deal with it, but 20 per cent. of the housing stock still needs substantial improvement. The Department of the Environment survey spells out the need to spend a great deal of money on council house repairs. The Audit Commission highlights a backlog of routine council house maintenance that has been building up over the past few years, at about £900 million per annum. Even allowing for exaggeration and for the style of surveyors—we perhaps know from personal experience how they put the fear of God into potential house purchasers—action is needed.

In particular, the Government's creation of the urban housing renewal unit is to be commended. Its range of housing initiatives, marrying public and private sector funds, is proving highly successful in exactly the ways that I outlined earlier—creating jobs, improving the lives of

individuals, providing the opportunity for home ownership, and making communities better places in which to live. That is why I ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to ensure that expenditure on housing matches the commitment on jobs, on inner city life and on home ownership. It is socially necessary and will also prove good politics.

My second specific point relates to overseas aid. In the past year the British public has demonstrated its readiness to give for famine relief. That may be an emotional response to a horrifying problem, but it is no less real for that. The problem and that response have raised the level of public awareness and desire for action to a new and higher level. That has been manifest in many ways over the past 12 months, most recently here at Westminster by the lobby on world development. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House will have been impressed by the organisation, the interest and the knowledge of the lobby as a whole. They were not just well-intentioned amateurs, out to do good at all costs. They reflected the much wider public appreciation of what needs to be done, what is possible, and what the public now expects from the British Government.

Any cut in the aid budget for next year would be wrong, and I hope that it has now been avoided. What is needed is a minimum increase of 5 per cent. to meet inflation, and a further 2 to 3 per cent. to recover the squeeze of the current year.

Britain's record of delivering aid when and where it is needed is excellent. Our emphasis on the longer-term solutions of enabling local people to feed themselves is the effective way forward. With our living standards, our history and our expertise, surely we cannot lessen our present contribution to a world problem of massive proportions. I welcome the references to the aid programme in the Gracious Speech.

Finally, I turn to a national project of major local interest to Kent and my constituency of Sevenoaks—the projected Channel fixed link. I welcome the project in principle, as do many of the population, but I wish to warn Ministers of the special anxieties of Kent. For all those who live in that county a fixed link may well appear not a benefit, but an unwelcome intrusion into our green and pleasant land. Whatever link is chosen, the funnel effect will and must bring increased development pressures on an area already affected by the M25, M26 and M20 motorways.

I wish to alert Ministers to the fact that environmental anxieties will be of major importance to all my constituents. We want assurances that the county structure plans and green belt policies will be strictly adhered to, and not eroded by new and much stronger pressures. The Channel fixed link can and should benefit the whole of Britain. That gain in economic activity countrywide should not be at the expense of life in the county of Kent.

I welcome the Gracious Speech and the programme it sets out. I have anxieties on the margin and with one or two specifics, but I have confidence in and give support to the total thrust of the Government's policies.

7.1 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): I do not usually go to the House of Lords to listen to the Queen's Speech because I do not like being summoned by a messenger from an undemocratic institution such as the House of Lords, and because recently the contents of the Queen's Speech have been predictable. However, this morning I made an exception and went to the other place to keep a check on what was going on. It never ceases to amaze me, and I wonder whether we are living in the same world. The complacent attitude of the majority of Members of both Houses seems to show a lack of communication between the people in Parliament and the real people with real problems in the real world outside the Palace of Westminster.

That attitude of complacency and being out of touch is reflected in the Queen's Speech. This is the seventh Queen's Speech since the Government took office, and each one has outstripped its predecessor as a recipe for unprecedented conflict, record unemployment and deepening divisions in society.

Despite the cooked statistics and downright lies, at least 4 million people in this country are unemployed. More than 40 per cent. of them have been out of work for more than a year. Every hon. Member who is anxious to speak the truth on behalf of his or her constituents can describe the devastating effect that that is having in almost every constituency. The Falkirk travel-to-work area, for example, has an unemployment rate of 18 per cent. and contains places such as Denny, where unemployment is more than 30 per cent. That was even before the crisis over the proposed closure of the Cruickshanks iron foundry.

In such circumstances it would make sense for the Government to consider upgrading the development area status of the Falkirk district, and to use public investment to stimulate the construction industry, for example, and to attract new industries, such as a coal liquefaction plant. Instead, the Government downgrade the development area status, introduce a Transport Bill which presents a serious threat to the local coachbuilding industry, and impose on the local authorities massive cuts in necessary expenditure, such as that on housing construction and modernisation programmes. The Government seem hell-bent on a doctrinaire worship of free market forces, and on a privatisation programme to sell some of the nation's most valuable assets. Since the Government took office they have privatised oil, gas, aerospace, shipbuilding, forestry, transport and telecommunications. In the Queen's Speech, even the management of the royal dockyards is up for privatisation.

I almost felt sorry for the Queen who had to read:

"My Government will bring forward legislation to introduce commercial management to my naval dockyards."

Where will it all end? If this goes on, the Government will soon be selling off the British Army to Securicor, and will force the Queen to read out a speech which states, "My Government will be introducing legislation to sell my Crown jewels." The Government have already sold many of the Crown jewels of British industry, and now they are threatening the very existence of others.

Other Scottish hon. Members have mentioned the steel industry, particularly Gartcosh. If it is closed, the effects of the closure will not only be felt in Lanarkshire and the immediate area, but there will be a crashing domino effect throughout the Scottish economy. It will affect job prospects for my constituents who may be employed, for example, at the port in Grangemouth, which handles more than 80,000 tonnes of finished steel a year. It is little wonder, therefore, that even some Scottish Tory Members are beginning to criticise the Government and British Steel's proposals, despite a circular from one of the "high heid yins" in the Scottish Tory party who told them to shut

[Mr. Dennis Canavan]

up. I hope that they will not shut up but will speak up and, more important, that when we vote on the future of Gartcosh, they will put their country before their party.

The internal tensions and divisions within the Scottish Tory party are the result of the Government breaking the consensus approach to politics of previous Tory leaders such as Harold Macmillan. It was based on a consensus for regional development, relatively full employment, improving the National Health Service, and a welfare state. That consensus has now been broken. We have for example, the Fowler proposals which will increase the gap between rich and poor, and which, combined with the continuing mass unemployment resulting from the Government's economic policies, will increase the possibility of social conflict.

It is sad that some Government Members and their supporters seem to relish the possibility of conflict. They certainly used the conflict in the south Atlantic to help them win the 1983 general election, and I suspect that some of them, including some Ministers, would like to use conflict on our streets to win the next general election.

Instead of offering constructive proposals to deal with deprivation in our inner cities and elsewhere, and instead of offering constructive proposals to improve job, education and housing opportunities, the Government are responding with more police powers, more truncheons, more riot shields and possibly more tear gas and plastic bullets.

I understand that the deputy chairman of the Tory party is a master of fiction, and by heavens the Tories will need one, and he seems to be the Goebbels of the Tory party. Mr. Archer is on record as telling young unemployed people to get off their backsides and look for work. That is the Tory party contribution to International Youth Year. I understand that Jeffrey Archer has since been told to apologise—no wonder, when one looks at the lack of job opportunities for young people.

In my area, Central region, the number of job vacancies for unemployed youngsters under the age of 18 is as follows: in Falkirk, seven; Stirling, four; Denny, no vacancies; Grangemouth, no vacancies; Bo'ness, no vacancies; and Alloa, no vacancies. That makes a total of 11 job vacancies in the whole of Central region, where more than 2,000 young people under the age of 18 are unemployed and more than 2,000 on youth training schemes face the possibility of not having a job at the end of their training. It is Jeffrey Archer who should get off his backside and go to places such as Denny, Falkirk and Bonnybridge and talk to some of the young unemployed people who have been deprived of work because of his party's doctrinaire policies.

It is not just the lack of employment opportunities but the lack of educational opportunities that is affecting young people. The Government must face up to their responsibilities in this matter, too. During the summer recess I went to several schools in my constituency and saw at first hand what can only be described as a grave crisis in Scottish education. The crisis has been precipitated by the Government's intransigence in refusing to meet the teachers' reasonable demands for an independent pay review. The dispute has been dragging on in Scotland for well over a year. Tomorrow there will be a lobby of Parliament by the Scottish teachers and their colleagues south of the border. I hope that the result of that lobby will be that the Government will offer a more constructive response.

So far, the Government have used their usual tactics. They have tried to divide and rule. They have tried to divide the head teachers from the teachers, and the parents from the teachers. So far, their tactics have failed. In my experience, the vast majority of parents, although seriously worried about the effect of the strike on their children's education, are very supportive of the teachers in their demand for an independent pay review. Most parents were incensed, just as most teachers were incensed, when just a few months ago the Government handed out increases of 17 per cent. or more to the top brass such as admirals, judges and generals, none of whom does a day's work as valuable as that of a teacher.

Most of the people of Scotland support the Scottish teachers. I remind the Government that the vast majority of Scottish people rejected the Government at the general election. Therefore, the Government cannot argue that they received a mandate from the people of Scotland to destroy the Scottish education system. Similarly, the Government received no mandate to destroy the Scottish steel industry; they received no mandate to destroy the welfare state; and they received no mandate to destroy what vestige of local democracy is still left in Scotland.

The sad fact is that Scotland is being ruled by a Secretary of State for Scotland who is increasingly out of touch with the people's real needs and aspirations. He is being increasingly rejected and discredited. He has his head in the sand. Not long ago he said that there was no demand by the people for a Scottish assembly, yet opinion poll after opinion poll shows not just that the Scottish Tory party is being reduced to an almost irrelevant rump, but a growing demand for meaningful devolution of power to the people by the setting up of a Scottish assembly. The Secretary of State may say that there is no demand for a Scottish assembly, but I tell him that there is no demand for him, the Prime Minister or the policies that they are trying to foist on the people of Scotland.

If the Government and Parliament continue to respond stubbornly to the legitimate demands of the people outside this place, this Parliament will fall increasingly into disrepute. Many of those who pretend to uphold parliamentary democracy and traditions, and all the related institutions, will be responsible for decreasing respect for Parliament among a growing number of people, who will see through the facade, despite all the pomp and ceremony of the State opening, the horses and carriages, Black Rod, the tiaras, coronets and the ermine robes, and a Queen's Speech that will do virtually nothing to help the vast majority of real people in the real world outside the Palace of Westminster.

7.17 pm

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) found so little to enjoy in the opening ceremony, with its pageantry and historical significance. He conjures up a terrible picture of stomping up the Corridor, glaring at Her Majesty, and coming back again. However, most people will find quite a lot in the Queen's Speech.

I do not think that anybody can take exception to what is said in the Queen's Speech about Northern Ireland, that the Government

"will seek widely acceptable arrangements for the devolution of power. They will seek to improve further their co-operation with the Government of the Irish Republic."

I do not know whether an arrangement with the Irish Republic will be possible and, even if it is, I do not know what will be in it, but we are right to try. When I listened to the speeches by two Northern Ireland Members, which were moderate and sensible, I wished sometimes that people who represent Northern Ireland would accept that the poor old British Government are not trying to trample anybody underfoot, except the terrorists. We are trying to find a solution to a very difficult problem, and the Government should be given every support for trying to reach an agreement with a sovereign power, without which we do not stand a chance of solving the problem.

I warmly welcome the measures to strengthen the powers of the police, which are greatly needed. I shall refer to that later.

I should like to refer to the removal of statutory restrictions on shop opening hours. My position on shop opening hours is well known. I have taken an unequivocal stance about the proposed measures. My only plea to the Government is that we should get together on this and that if there is whipping on the main question, there should at least be some means to amend the Bill in Committee, which I hope will be on the Floor of the House.

I wish to concentrate on the statement in the Gracious Speech that the Government will take measures to facilitate

"further reductions in the burden of income tax."

Consideration of the Gracious Speech allows us to look ahead to the parliamentary year and to consider what should be done in the programme for that period. By far the most crucial event will be the Budget next spring. The Queen's Speech obviously makes no reference to what we may expect from the Budget other than the words that I have quoted, but now is the time for hon. Members to make their views known — at the start of the new Session. It is no good waiting until all the deliberations have taken place and this major event stares us in the face next spring.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has made it clear that his purpose is to make cuts in the rates of direct taxation, which he sees as a further stimulus to the economy, with consequent effects on unemployment. The Government have had considerable success with the economy. We have heard about some of these already today — the reduction in inflation, the new realism between employer and employee, the improvement in the performance of nationalised industries and more recently, as was revealed so rightly and cogently by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, the upturn in economic activity generally.

For me, the key is to build on those successes in a constructive way. If any surplus available next spring is used to reduce direct taxation across the board and the pound remains high, a great deal of the extra spending will go on imports. In view of our strong balance of payments at present this might be acceptable if the incentive effect was strong, but I do not believe that it is. I do not believe that people work harder or start businesses just because two or three pence are taken off income tax. The exception to this is the lower paid. If the reliefs were concentrated there, well and good. To be truly an incentive the reliefs must be dramatic, but to be dramatic they must necessarily be expensive. That is the problem. We cannot do that without a much higher surplus than we are likely to have next spring.

We are a mixed economy, like every other Western country, all of which have varying degrees of Government intervention. The greatest measure of Government intervention occurs in the United States of America, and people tend to forget that. Government intervention in this country varies from sector to session, but overall it is very strong, although Socialists would like it to be much stronger. I see it as essentially a pump-priming operation, initiating improvements and fading out when the private sector can take over.

I do not conceal the fact that I am enormously influenced by the success of Milton Keynes, my own constituency, where the state has provided a framework for a burgeoning development of commerce and industry — an example which has been followed in the urban development corporations. That example should also be followed in the depressed parts of the inner cities. No one has been a stronger supporter of local government independence than I have, but I accept that people such as Mr. Grant have driven business and commerce away from those areas. If we really want to revitalise those areas and encourage employment, it must be done by an agency which knows what it is about and has the commercial expertise to do it.

I want the Government to achieve the triple goal of social progress, reduction of unemployment and revitalisation of British industry. Hon. Members have already mentioned the very cogent report that was produced by the Lords. That report should not be swept under the carpet. It bears a great deal of reading because it was written by people with experience on the ground in British industry, and that is extremely important.

People today are very aware that so much in our country is second rate. They want to see better housing, because they know how much of our housing is bad. They want better education and better health care, although we have already done a great deal in that area. They want clean streets, clean air and clean water. They want an efficient transport system of which we can be proud. Many more people, too, want a stronger effort to be made to help the Third world. That pressing need has already been stressed in the debate and we must take note of it.

When the Government took office in 1979, it was accepted on all sides that the rates of taxation were far too high and that it was quite right to bring them down. The position is different now. Faced with the choice of even lower taxes or improved services and infrastructure, I believe that most people would choose the latter. It is generally accepted that a great deal needs to be done and must be done. It must be done efficiently, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) said, it will be far more difficult and expensive to do if we wait. If the additional expenditure is administered wisely, the money will be spent in this country, not on imports. There will be a direct effect on employment, and the additional advantage that carefully controlled inflation of this kind can be met by the existing resources of British industry.

Nothing can excuse the recent violence in Birmingham and London, and the first absolute priority is that the law must be upheld. Nevertheless, something must be done about the environment in those very bad areas, and that means spending money. If we do not tackle those and

[Mr. W. Benyon]

similar tasks, the situation will become far worse. The inequalities between those who have jobs and those who do not, and between one part of the country and another, will become worse and the ideal of one nation, which has inspired moderate politicians for more than a century, although many have expressed it in different words, will recede further into the future.

We have so much to do. If people want these things to happen, they must will the means. That is the message for this Session, and now is the time to make it clear, as Ministers decide what will be in the Budget next spring. My message is simple—do not cut taxes, build a better Britain.

7.28 pm

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): The hon. Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon) has raised some very important issues with a clarity that we do not always hear from Ministers. When the Prime Minister was jibing at certain Opposition policies, it struck me that the Queen's Speech showed that in their seventh year of office the Government have lost their way. The programme outlined as a prospectus for tackling some of our economic problems and soothing some of our social ills is to be more of the same quack medicine as we had in the previous six Queen's Speeches. There is the same reliance on privatisation, there is only token language about the problems of unemployment and there are to be further cuts in public expenditure and services, despite all that the hon. Member for Milton Keynes has just said.

Having been employed by the Scottish gas board, when it really was a gas board, I am sorry that the Government propose to privatise that unique public asset. The implication of privatisation for safety or, for that matter, the rich pickings that will go with the privatisation of British Gas, have not been mentioned. It was all wrapped up in a great haze and suggested that, somehow, privatisation will be beneficial to the great British public. It will certainly be beneficial to the stockbroker belt, because there have already been a lot of rich pickings from the sale of public assets. Many stockbrokers have got fat at the public's—indeed, the taxpayer's—expense from share flotations.

When the hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) referred to British Telecom, I noticed that he did not spend too much time giving all the reasons why it was such a good thing. We have received letters from old-age pensioners and other organisations who are concerned about the latest increases in telephone charges and rentals. We should not forget that prices went up before British Telecom was floated — no doubt to boost its attractiveness on the stock exchange. We have simply replaced a public monopoly with a private monopoly which Members of Parliament are less able to influence.

Scottish housing has been mentioned. I am concerned about tomorrow's Cabinet meeting. I understand that the Secretary of State for the Environment is to speak up for more resources to tackle the terrible problems in council housing in England. I hope that the Secretary of State for Scotland will speak up about the even greater problems in the Scottish public sector housing.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Some hope.

Mr. Craigen: It is true that the Secretary of State for Scotland is a Mackintosh man. He gives the impression of being so reasonable and of almost being a wet, but when he goes into the Cabinet room he is bone dry. He never speaks up for the kind of public expenditure initiatives that are required.

I am apprehensive about the mention of more privatisation of council housing estates. Does that mean that the Government intend to drive a coach and four through the legislation on tenants' rights? There is already one consultative document, issued by the Scottish Office, which hints that if a local authority is coerced into privatisation — as has happened in some parts of the country—and a tenant is evicted for that purpose, the local authority will have to find alternative accommodation for him.

We are told that there will be legislation on the sale of housing association houses. It will create enormous difficulties for many of the voluntary housing associations which have developed in the last decade or more. The Government should have relied more heavily on the code of practice that was drawn up some time ago with the Housing Corporation in Scotland and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations. The proposal to legislate makes nonsense of the fact that the Scottish housing associations are the main providers of special needs rented accommodation for the elderly and for single persons. By forcing housing associations into sales, the Government will complicate tenement rehabilitation exercises in Glasgow and greatly affect work being done by housing associations.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): Does my hon. Friend agree that, far from doing what he has described, the Government should consider means to tighten up on private landlords who conduct their business disgracefully? Does he remember a Bill promoted by my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), which he and I supported, which concerned the extortionate rents charged by some private landlords? Does he agree that the Government would do far better to tackle that problem?

Mr. Craigen: I entirely agree. I am not unmindful of the efforts that my hon. Friend has made behind the scenes on this matter. If there is an easy way in which to do things, the Government will find it, just as long as it does not complicate matters for their vested interests.

Scottish education was not mentioned in the Queen's Speech. My hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) mentioned the dispute which is dragging on. There seems to be no prospect of it being resolved in the near future. The Government's inflexible sitting on the sidelines is a source of great anxiety to parents, considerable frustration to teachers and demoralisation for pupils. The dispute has dragged on for more than one year. The Government are seriously undermining the Scottish education system and there will be a heavy price to pay for this festering sore. The Government must come off their pedestal and do something to resolve the impasse.

There is not much about employment in the Queen's speech, but several hon. Members have referred to the importance of manufacturing. There is something seriously wrong when the replacement engines for the QE2, which was built on the Clyde, are to be built in West Germany. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for

Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) has a close interest in this matter. The prospect of that happening is a terrible indictment of the Government's industrial policies.

I watched — only a little — the Conservative party conference at Blackpool. We had information technology and science exhibits cluttering up the corridors. However, we will need steel and other manufacturing assets to push the science revolution forward. As for what my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie) said, although Scotland has done fairly well in attracting microchip jobs, during the past couple of years areas in the south of England have done proportionately better in attracting such jobs.

They are fears about the closure of Gartcosh, anxieties about Dalziel and continuing worries about Ravenscraig. Steel is crucial to Scotland. The steel industry in Scotland must not be extinguished; it must continue to play an important part in the provision of manufacturing jobs there.

The only light on the horizon is through the Channel tunnel. I confess that I warmed to the prospect of a Channel tunnel only when I thought that it would benefit the steel industry. However, the more one reads about the possible extinction of Scottish steel and the demise of much of the steel industry elsewhere, the more one comes to the conclusion that the main beneficiaries of the Channel tunnel in manufacturing terms will be on the continent. The matter is caught up with the problems of being in the European Community.

I am sorry that there was so little in the Queen's Speech about arms control and disarmament negotiations and trying to reduce tension in the world. There is little evidence of ministerial activity in these matters. We seem to rely heavily on President Reagan and to go out of our way to take part in his plans for star wars. It is sad that the main opportunity for growth in employment is likely to come from the defence industry and its research side.

Dr. Godman: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government could display their concern for the problems faced in the west of Scotland by placing defence orders for surface vessels and submarines with the Yarrow and Scott Lithgow shipyards, which are in desperate need of orders?

Mr. Craigen: That would have a considerable effect on the employment fortunes of the Clyde. I hope that Ministers will take note of what my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow said. My hon. Friend, who has been a Member of the House for a few years, must recognise that the Government's greatest fault is that they do not listen to anybody. I will leave the matter at that.

I conclude on the issue that will be most bitterly fought out during the next 12 months following the Fowler review —the Government's plans to reform the social security system. I am sure that William Beveridge would turn in his grave if he saw some of the proposals emanating from the Elephant and Castle. I have had correspondence with DHSS Ministers about the proposals for the social fund. I have not yet had a clear answer about the Government's intention to replace certain supplementary benefits by the new social fund. It sounds like something invented in Brussels. The proposal cash-limits the proper needs of individuals. More insidious than that, the applicant will have to be first in the queue before he gets anything from the fund. If he comes late in the calendar year, when the social fund allocations of the Maryhill or Springburn offices have been spent, he will be told, "You are entitled, but you are not getting anything because we have nothing left in the kitty." Ministers still have not told me how the social fund will be allocated to different areas—whether areas with more unemployment and more people on low incomes than others will receive more money.

We know the Prime Minister's view on many aspects of the social services. Recent Government proposals would have led to the closure of some small chemists' shops in my area. I received a two-page letter from the Prime Minister, which I can sum up by saying that the Prime Minister's prescription for helping small businesses is to close them. Yet the Government have relentlessly uprated prescription charges since they came to office. It is ridiculous that nearly 4 million people now qualify for free prescriptions, whether they know it or not, because their incomes are so low, and that nearly 2 million of them are members of families where the head of the household is employed. What an indictment of the Government's approach.

The Gracious Speech is more significant for what it does not say than for what it says. It shows that the Government are completely at sea in terms of remedying the terrible destruction that they have engineered in our economy during the past six years, or over the mending of our social cohesion, which was once the proud boast of Great Britain throughout the world.

7.46 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill, (Mr. Craigen). I welcome the commitment in the Queen's Speech to the sale of housing association homes, because many housing association tenants in my constituency would welcome the right to purchase their homes at a discount, as happens elsewhere in Britain.

I, too, wish to mention education. It is especially worrying that 87 per cent. of members of the Educational Institute of Scotland—the largest teachers' union—have voted to boycott all examinations next summer. The idea of an entire generation of schoolchildren having their education prospects blighted causes great concern to their parents. The examination board will have special problems. First, there is the problem of sending in the examination candidate forms, although it appears that that hurdle has been surmounted. Secondly, and of far greater importance, in many practical and technical subjects a teacher input is essential. In craft and design, 70 per cent. of the assessment must be completed within the schools, and in O-grade home economics about 50 per cent. of the marks are awarded internally. If those marks are not forwarded to the examination board there will be substantial problems, because no awards could be given. Teacher input is also vital where safety at work is involved, including work with a lathe. It is also extremely important in music and in modern languages.

The third problem occurs with the central team of examiners, who are usually experienced teachers at principal teacher level. They are employed by the board to mark and organise their subjects, and they are vital to the system. Even if they were willing to co-operate, their

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

colleagues might not cover their work. Even if they came forward to organise examinations, it is unlikely in the present climate that their jobs would be covered.

Fourthly, even if pupils sit exams, there may not be enough teachers available to mark the papers. The Association of University Teachers might express solidarity with the schoolteaching profession, and it might become difficult to persuade university teachers to mark papers. There are the problems of the marking of practical subjects, the provision of a central team of markers and the supply of sufficient markers. These are very serious matters for examinations.

In Scotland, markers are required to satisfy a higher standard than in the rest of Britain. They must have three years of teaching experience at the level at which they will mark. At the same time, the Scottish examinations board does not normally take markers from the rest of Britain, because the syllabuses are different.

I have in my hand a letter from the Prime Minister which I received a few hours ago. It says:

"At a meeting with George Younger on 27 September, the representatives of the Teachers' Side suggested that if substantially more money were offered—without preconditions—the teachers would then be prepared to discuss conditions of service and curricular development."

The letter continues:

"Scottish Office officials are now exploring aspects of these proposals with representatives of the Teachers' Side to see if a basis can be found for negotiations which might lead to a settlement."

I very much hope that every attempt will be made to reach a settlement, if only for a first phase. The teachers' dispute has lasted longer than any other teachers' dispute.

The teachers' unions claim that the teachers are more poorly paid than in other European Community countries. However, in other European Community countries the conditions of service may be more clearly defined. I am making inquiries into that point.

What gives cause for encouragement is that the Secretary of State replied to me recently on the Floor of the House and said that not only has an additional offer of £125 million been made available and that negotiations are on offer, but that the £125 million is over and above normal pay rises and that the normal pay rises are a matter for negotiation. It seems that an enormous percentage of parents throughout the land hope that this dispute can be settled reasonably and fairly and that the educational system can be geared to providing pupils with the training requirements that are needed to take advantage of the opportunities of the future. This can be done effectively only if the teachers are fully involved in working with and helping pupils to achieve their aim.

It is recognised that many of those who enter industry at the outset of their careers may have to undertake a retraining programme at some time in the course of their careers. I was interested to read in today's edition of the *Glasgow Herald* an article which deals with this point. It says:

"The problem in 10 years' time, when demographic studies suggest that the end of the sixties baby boom will result in a Scottish population of 16-year-olds only 60 per cent. of what it is today, could be frightening unless we lay the basis for a revolution of training and industry related education now . . . Experts and Government Ministers say that education and training is not given the respect it deserves by society. It does not acquire the status here that it does abroad, and even in many third world countries."

That is why it is extremely important that everything possible should be done to bring the dispute to a satisfactory and reasonable conclusion.

Mr. Canavan: Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that to reach a reasonable and fair settlement, and an end to the dispute and the crisis facing children in our schools, the Secretary of State for Scotland should set up an independent review for Scottish teachers?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his contribution, but I am suggesting that we have moved on from that stage, and I shall say why. The day after the meeting between the Secretary of State and the teachers' representatives in September, *The Scotsman* published a report which said:

"The four Scottish teaching unions want more money from the Government now, with no preconditions. If this is forthcoming, they would be prepared to talk about conditions of service, based on the report on workload agreed between management and unions last November . . . Mr. Pollock said: 'We put this forward as an alternative to an independent review. They will now have to look at what we are suggesting.'"

I believe strongly that the overwhelming majority of my constituents consider negotiations should take place with a view to reaching a settlement. However, targeting is not the way to achieve the purposes which the teachers would like to achieve.

It is understandable that teachers want to raise the stature of their profession. They want it to have the same stature as that enjoyed by doctors, lawyers, accountants and ministers of the Church. That is an altogether worthy aim, but the way to achieve it is through negotiations. On 14 June the *Glasgow Herald* wrote:

"Ministers cannot be seen to give in to targeted strike action in schools, or they risk similar attention from any other public sector union with a claim to present."

My belief is that the way forward is through negotiations. I very much hope that flexibility will be shown by the negotiators on both sides and by those who influence the negotiations.

Teachers work far more than 32 hours a week. They have nothing to lose from the full facts being made absolutely clear. They should surely be paid for what they do. There is an overwhelming case for a first phase agreement. If there are other much more complex issues, they should be negotiated later.

I hope that those who are directly involved will do everything possible to try to obtain an early, just and honourable settlement, in the interests of pupils, parents, teachers and the country at large. Our children are our country's future, and we must not fail them.

7.56 pm

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): I cannot claim to be able to comment on what was said by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) about Scottish education. However, I agree with him that this damaging dispute must be settled soon in the interests of children's education. The way to settle it is by proper and meaningful negotiations. The Secretary of State should understand this and allow the negotiations to proceed unfettered.

The Gracious Speech says:

"A Bill will be introduced to remove statutory restrictions on shop opening hours."

A number of hon. Members have alluded to this subject. From a sedentary position, my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) said that it would be

a charter for heathens. I cannot entirely agree with him. Why blame the heathens? They do not know any better. This is a charter for the greedy.

A recent HTV television programme dealt with the future of trading and referred to the establishment of hypermarkets on the periphery of our towns. The forthcoming legislation will facilitate that kind of trading. It will not cover the shop on the street corner. If this measure becomes law, the multiple store, not the small shop, will benefit, so that this will be a charter for the greedy.

I am glad that a Minister from the Welsh Office is sitting on the Government Front Bench. He knows as well as I do that countless people in Wales, England and Scotland want Sunday to be preserved as a time for refreshment. They want to have time to be with their families and to enjoy family life—the kind of thing which, apparently, appeals to the right hon. Lady the Prime Minister. I suggest to Conservative Members, many of whom have alluded to this subject in their speeches, that they should make it clear to the Government that they have no intention of allowing the Government to destroy something which is part and parcel of the heritage of this country.

The leader of the Liberal party reminded us of what was said at the Tory party conference about the presentation of policy. If the Gracious Speech is an example of that presentation, I am not impressed by the presentation or by what is presented. The Government's programme will do little to deal with the problem of unemployment which afflicts so many of our people so sorely.

How can the Government say that privatisation of the assets of the British Gas Corporation will advance employment prospects? How can they say that introducing commercial management into the naval dockyards will produce better employment results? The Prime Minister says that we should buy British, but she does not seem to be worried about flogging off what is Britain's. We have seen that when other national assets have been sold, and we cannot say that the service from those industries has been improved.

Not everything in the Gracious Speech is objectionable. I welcome wholeheartedly the fact that we are to have legislation to protect animals being used for experimental or other scientific purposes. That will meet a wish in many quarters. I am also glad that we shall have legislation to deal with the vile creatures who traffic in drugs. Their behaviour has been the means of the destruction of much of the flower of our nation. We can gladly give our assent to those measures.

The Government will obviously make great play of law and order. We have been told that that is the battleground on which the Prime Minister will pitch her next election campaign. No Opposition Member denies that there must be a determined effort to preserve law and order. If there is no law and order, there will be no future for any of us.

However, the Government must not think that the police are an instrument for resolving problems that have been created by the neglect of our social conditions. An increase in the number of police is no substitute for better housing, for finding employment, for ensuring that our people get the best possible education or for a proper social security system.

The Gracious Speech says that a Bill will be introduced to reform the social security system. It would be far better if the Government told us that they were setting up an independent inquiry into our social provision, as happened when William Beveridge carried out his momentous inquiry which resulted in our present social security system. In the 40 years since then, changes have occurred in our society and in the nature of that society. A full independent investigation of what is required would be much more profitable than legislation which may be ill founded because it is based on a prejudiced view.

One of my hon. Friends concluded his speech by saying that, unless the Government take notice of what people outside are telling us, we shall become irrelevant. If that happens, it will be a sad and sorry day. This nation will disappear. The Government must take notice of what is being said in the House and of what people outside are asking us to tell the Government.

8.6 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): I welcome many parts of the Gracious Speech, and I join the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman) in welcoming particularly the proposals to limit severely the use of animals for medical experiments and the Government's determination to find a way of depriving drug traffickers of their ill-gotten gains, although I have a nasty feeling that that will prove to be a lot more difficult than seems likely at first sight.

I also welcome the Government's intention to seek to normalise our relations with democratic Argentina and what they say about the European Community. However, I warn them that if, as they say and as I hope, we are seeking to achieve a true unified internal market, we shall have to be prepared to dismantle the non-tariff obstacles to trade that we expect the rest of the Community to abolish urgently.

The Gracious Speech mentions the reform of the social security system and the planning system and the ending of restrictions on Sunday trading. In those matters, the Government are broadly right in their aim, but sadly astray in their timing. Such reforms should be brought in at the beginning of a Parliament and not towards the end of one.

The purpose of my speech is to express concern about some of the Government's deeper purposes. That concern goes far deeper than mere electoral anxiety, because I am fairly certain that the Conservatives will win the next election. My concern is about what sort of country we shall be trying to govern after that. That concern is shared by a number of my hon. Friends and was eloquently expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon).

The three great achievements of the Government since 1979 — the curbing of inflation, the restoration of respect, if not affection, for Britain overseas, and the humbling of the intolerable pretensions of trade union godfathers such as Mr. Scargill—are beyond price and would not have been won by a Government of any other party, self-evidently not by a Labour Government and not by an alliance Government, who would have been obliged to compromise on issues where it was essential to have a clear-cut result.

Furthermore, I am certain that the Government desperately want to bring down unemployment—and not merely for electoral purposes.

I am certain that the Government intend to preserve and improve social services and to safeguard the environment. What is more, when Ministers say that the best way to cut unemployment and to finance better social services is to

[Sir Anthony Meyer]

create more national wealth, and that the best way to create more national wealth is to cut all forms of taxation, especially personal taxation, they are totally sincere. They might also be right, although the evidence to support them is slow to appear.

The Government mix of higher incentives for the successful and less featherbedding for the unsuccessful might be the shortest route to a better future for all, but it is also the bumpiest. Unless we arrive at some recognisable destination much sooner than seems likely, the strains imposed upon the car of state may cause it to fly apart.

In other words, like a number of my hon. Friends, I am becoming worried about national unity. The Prime Minister does not like the word "consensus". She is right to dislike the consensus of acquiesence in inexorable national decline. But in chucking out the soapy bath water of that consensus she might be chucking out a very delicate baby.

British society has been admired for its highly developed sense of solidarity or, at the least, for a respect and tolerance between different classes, regions and races. We do not, outside Northern Ireland, hate one another for our beliefs, as do the French, or despise one another because we are northerners or southerners, as do the Italians. We do not, thank God, despite the malign efforts of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), seek scapegoats among the minorities in our midst for our own failings, as the Germans once so dreadfully did.

Southern Britain, with its labour shortages, is properly worried that people in northern Britain, in Wales and in Scotland who want to work cannot find jobs. Those of us who live in safe, white, middle class areas are worried about what is happening in our big cities. We want to do something about it, even if it will cost us money. Most of those who have done very well, thank you, under this Government still want to maintain public health, public education and public pension provision even if it costs them more in rates and taxes than they get out of those services.

Many of us would like Britain to make a much more generous response not just to short-term crises of starvation in Africa, but to long-term projects for putting the developing countries on the path to sustainable growth.

I must say frankly that some of the Government's policies as they seem to emerge from the sparse language of the Queen's Speech, could only too easily damage the sense of national solidarity. Of course we all want tax cuts if that means that people with barely enough to live on will no longer have to pay tax or that people on low wages or training allowances will no longer be worse off than they would be on social security. Across-the-board tax cuts could widen still further the gap between those who have much more money than they can want and those who are in real need—unless of course tax concessions at the bottom of the scale are paid for by higher taxes at the top. However, that does not seem to be how the Chancellor of the Exchequer's mind is working.

I am not entirely happy about the Government's approach to the all-important unemployment issue. I welcome Lord Young's appointment, and still more do I welcome the wide powers that he has been given. However, I am none too happy about all the talk about the number of new jobs being created. I do not mind that many of them are part-time jobs because I am sure that that is the work pattern for the future. How are the part-time jobs being shared? Many seem to be going to married women whose husbands are already at work, and some of them seem to be going to people who already have a job. The impact of such new jobs on the total unemployed is worryingly small.

It is not helpful to say that many people, especially the young unemployed, do not want a job. That is untrue, at least in Wales and in the north. Young people finishing the admirable youth training scheme and middle-aged workers thrown on the scrap heap of redundancy are desperately, pathetically anxious to find work. Even if in such places as London it were partly true, that does not diminish the danger to our social fabric represented by so many thousands of unemployed, particularly young unemployed, and more particularly young black unemployed in our big cities.

That brings me to the last and deepest of my anxieties. Voices are beginning to be raised from Right-wing press commentators urging the Government to exploit the law and order issue to its utmost. I am sure that the new Home Secretary, who is widely admired on both sides of the House, will have no truck with any attempt to extract party political advantage from the natural worry that people experience at the spectacle of the police facing armed riot in our big cities or mobs of stone-throwing pickets. This is material far too explosive and volatile to be safely used for party political purposes.

Of course this Government—any Government—must give unwavering support to the police. Of course no Government can condone crime or permit no-go areas. The reaction of some local community leaders who appear to condone violence, even murder, is intolerable. But I warn the Government that, if we are seen to be trying to make party political capital out of the issue and to make it the "Falklands factor" of the next election, it will blow up in our faces. Even if that helped us to win—I do not believe that it would—we would be left with a country which was ungovernable.

8.17 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Clywd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer). Many hon. Members have a great respect for him. It is sad that his relevant comments are not heard more often from Ministers. I hope that his comments will be noted by Ministers.

I welcome one reference in the Gracious Speech. I refer to the Government's pledge to support United Nations' efforts to secure a settlement in Cyprus. Britain is one of the guarantor powers for Cyprus. Since the brutal invasion 11 years ago, many hon. Members have genuinely tried to bring the two sides together. Many of us deeply regret the lack of any meaningful progress over the years.

Talks went on for many years and we hoped that they would result in a meaningful and acceptable settlement, but they came to nothing. As much as I and many others want a settlement, no progress will be made until we see evidence that Mr. Denktash, the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, is prepared to discuss with Greek Cypriot leaders proposals for an acceptable agreement and an acceptance that more difficult issues will be fully discussed.

There must be two major areas of understanding. I am sure that Mr. Denktash is in no doubt about them, but I

wonder whether the Government fully understand them. They should try to do so. First, until there is a complete removal of Turkish troops from northern Cyprus, there will be little willingness by the Greek Cypriot leaders and their communities to hold discussions with Mr. Denktash. It is hard to establish how many Turkish troops are in northern Cyprus, but we know that they run into many thousands. Many people are amazed that they are still there. Until they are removed—even if it is a phased removal — there will be problems in achieving any agreement.

The second area, which is closely allied with the first, relates to those in Cyprus who were forced out of their homes and their lands 11 years ago, and who have never been allowed to return. Until the displaced can return in complete safety, there cannot be agreement. I know that Mr. Denktash is not unaware of that, as it has been put to him many times.

Until those two basic issues are resolved, there will be a long struggle to try to reach a settlement. I know that some Conservative Members are as committed as I am to seeking a settlement in Cyprus, under which both Greek and Turkish Cypriots can live and work together. Anything that the Government can do to speed up such a settlement will be welcomed.

On a different topic, as I represent an inner London borough I feel that the omission from the Gracious Speech of any reference to the problems of the inner cities is a disgrace. Many hon. Members, to their credit, have referred to these problems, and having known those hon. Members for many years, I readily accept their genuine commitment to solving them. However, I regret that we do not have a similar understanding from the Government.

In recent weeks there have disorders in our inner cities. Had the Prime Minister and the Government been concerned about the problems and committed to helping to alleviate them, they would have included a reference in the Gracious Speech. Various hon. Members could speak for Liverpool, Birmingham and Manchester; I speak for a London borough. We could all refer to the main problems—mass unemployment, housing in urgent need of repair, the rundown of our hospital services and the lack of facilities for people of all ages. My constituents repeatedly say, "We do not want handouts. We want genuine help so that we can begin to rebuild our communities."

I listened to the many debates on the abolition of the Greater London council during our last Session. The GLC was subjected to great criticism of how it spent its money. Yet it was only GLC involvement in many projects in London that led to hope for the many people who are out of work, yet want work—the elderly, the disabled and the one-parent families. Those are the people living in inner city areas who have problems and must be helped to exist week by week with them. Often it is left solely to the GLC to finance the urgently needed projects.

We often hear of the divide between the north and the south, yet there is also a divide within the south. There are areas in Wandsworth whose residents have no idea of the problems in Balham and Tooting, the area that I represent. Those people may live in Putney, and never go to Balham. They have no idea of the needs of the area.

The Gracious Speech says:

"Measures will be introduced to strengthen the powers of the police in combating disorder".

We must assume that that refers to the unrest in our inner cities in recent weeks. I and other hon. Members representing such areas try to play a constructive part in helping to alleviate problems. When we meet youngsters, whether black or white, do we now say, "You start watching it, because the Government will give the police extra powers to combat problems that you might create?" Their instant response will be, "You go back and tell the Prime Minister that if she is going to spend money, not to spend it on the police force or on trying to frighten us, but on something that will give us hope in our communities." That is what we really need.

In all our multiracial communities, whether white, black or Asian, the theme is always the same: "This is our home. This is where our youngsters were born. We are as British as anyone living in the community." Sometimes hon. Members say that certain people want to create disorder. I tell them that thay do not want to create disorder in my community; they want to live together and to work with the police. What they really want is respect and help with their problems. Until that happens, the Prime Minister may threaten the communities, but it will have no effect.

If only the Government showed such a commitment, we could begin to alleviate the problems. I wish that Ministers would not pay fleeting five or 10-minute visits and say, "How terrible. We must try to help you." They should go into the areas and try to understand the people's feelings and aspirations. If they did that, not only would the change of attitude that we all want occur quickly, but there would be a rebuilding of the confidence that is needed in the inner cities.

We must in the coming months have a response from the Government on issues such as these. They can spend as much as they like on the police, but as sure as night follows day—I take no pleasure in saying this, but it is a fact of life—if they continue to neglect the problems of the people of the inner city areas, as those people believe they have been neglected, we shall see further problems, and no hon. Member in any part of the House wants to see further problems.

The initiative now rests with the Government. I beg them to listen to what decent and honourable people who live in the inner cities are saying. They are pleading, "Help us and we will respond and show the pride that deep down we have in our homes and the communities in which we live." That is the real test for the Government.

8.32 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox). I agreed with much of what he said. I often visit his constituency, which has some beautiful parts. Indeed, it has some of the best parts. His aim, which we all share, of seeking equality before the law for people of all colours and creeds is crucial to the successful future of the nation.

I hope that hon. Members will forgive me if I depart shortly after completing my remarks. Bishop David Shepherd is in my constituency this evening and I hope to have the opportunity to talk to him about some of these issues on a national basis and in relation to Southall, where, as the hon. Member for Tooting will be aware, these matters are of great importance.

I support hon. Members who have said that they have worries about a measure to remove restrictions on Sunday trading. I am a firm opponent of unlicensed Sunday

[Mr. Harry Greenway]

trading. I fear that the removal of those restrictions will damage our whole way of life. The move is offensive to the religious feelings of large numbers of people in the community. I am sure that there could be a compromise. I would be prepared to go along with a 2 o'clock start, leaving Sunday mornings for worship. That would at least ensure that those who worked on Sundays were secure in their rights and would not be liable to pressure—and pressure being brought to bear on people is a worry that many of us have. I am not particularly happy to go that far, but it is a compromise solution which I would be willing to accept.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that he will not give way to pressure from Whips or anyone else to conform in the matter, but will exercise his personal judgment on the Sunday trading issue, which is an extremely important issue and one of conscience?

Mr. Greenway: It is indeed a matter of conscience, and at the conclusion of the debate I voted against the Auld report. I had hoped that there might be a free vote on the subject. I have made my position clear, and I must stand by that.

I also welcome the promise in the Queen's Speech to give protection to animals, particularly at the time of slaughter. Every year 135 million chickens are slaughtered. They are picked up like bunches of grapes and carried about struggling and suffering before being slaughtered. That will not do. About 70 million animals, pigs and cattle, are also slaughtered, and they are not always stunned properly before slaughter. I warmly welcome the promise in the Gracious Speech to do something about that.

I am particularly delighted with the paragraph that says:

"Legislation will be introduced for England and Wales to improve the management of schools and to promote the professional effectiveness of teachers."

I must upset the unity that has existed across the Floor of the House by deploring some of the sanctimonious remarks that have been made by hon. Members representing Scottish and other constituencies about the present teachers' dispute. I remind hon. Members that I was paid the Houghton award in 1974, but its value, 34 per cent., was eroded by 1977, and by 1979—the time of the general election—we were worse off under the then Lib-Lab Administration than we had been in 1974. Now teachers are 9 per cent. better off.

I agree that teachers must be better paid. I remind hon. Members—I have not before mentioned it in the House — of what happened when there was a previous teachers' dispute. A Labour Government were in power at the time and some of us went to lobby Anthony Crosland. In the process we met Mrs. Barbara Castle, the then Secretary of State for Employment. We had a chat with her, and she could not have been nicer. At the conclusion of our talk she said, "Good luck boys. I hope you win." Then she went off to the Cabinet and voted against us. We got nothing from that Labour Administration, so let us not have too much sanctimony from Opposition Members on this issue. Their remarks do not ring true to those of us who have been through disputes of this kind.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: I will not give way again because time is running short.

In relation to the whole question of the management of schools, those who are genuinely concerned about the issue have reason to be worried by the tremendous pressure from large numbers of parents who want to get their children into independent schools. They want to do it by way of assisted places schemes, by working overtime or by doing two or three jobs to pay their children's fees, simply because they are worried about the condition of state education, particularly in comprehensive schools.

The time has come for a full inquiry to be conducted into comprehensive schools. There has never been such an inquiry. Let me make it clear that I have given my life to comprehensive schools, having worked in them for over 20 years. Thus, I am not knocking them when I say that we must inquire fully into their organisation with a view to trying to achieve better management and teaching.

A clear look must be taken at discipline and at the attendance of children. In some schools in some years there is 50 per cent. truancy, and that will not do. The children's attitude to work needs to be examined, and the same goes for the attitude to work of some of the staff. The comprehensives need to be looked at academically and in terms of their pastoral organisation. We must see whether we are giving a fair deal to children with difficulties, to under-achievers and to gifted children. Many gifted children and under-achievers are not getting a fair deal, and something must be done about that.

Perhaps the time has come to consider whether teachers should be paid on a regional basis. I am not sure of the cost of property in, say, Scotland, but in some parts of England, particularly London, houses of two or three storeys cost about £250,000. The hon. Member for Tooting will support me in saying that. In Parsons Green, Pimlico and other areas where teachers have to live, houses are fetching enormous sums. Houses in Wandsworth fetch £100,000, £150,000, £200,000 and even more. Housing in, say, the west country is much cheaper; one can buy a house there for perhaps £35,000.

Is it reasonable, therefore, to say that there should be one scale of pay for teachers applicable wherever they live? I appreciate that in inner London teachers get an allowance of £1,044, but nobody will argue that that covers the cost of housing, let alone other costs of living which are more expensive than elsewhere in the country.

Other areas of schooling need to be examined because of serious decline. In inner London, children are no longer taught competitive games. The ILEA says that the competitive instinct must be curbed. How does it do that? It has stopped team games. Girls do not play netball because boys cannot. There must only be games that boys and girls can play together. In various comprehensive schools boys and girls are diving on to mats and shinning up and down ropes, but they are never allowed to compete. Children want team games. It is a serious problem. I am building up to have a little talk to Frances Morrell and her accolytes to see what can be done, because they are out of touch with reality. They have no idea what motivates children.

Another worry is the attitude of some teachers towards the police. It is serious, because the Inner London Teachers Association has said that it will do all that it can to stop policemen entering schools. The police must go into schools. They should go to schools at least once a year to tell children, whatever their ages, about their job and

the service that they offer to the community. The police may also have to go into schools to deal with child molesters and other problems. The idea of some teachers that the police should be kept out is worrying and bad.

In primary education, insufficient emphasis is given to all types of basic needs, such as discipline and the factors that motivate children. Children want to know, to understand and to strive. We have forgotten those matters. I hope that the Bill will inspire their restoration.

The Select Committee on Education will be reporting soon on primary schools and achievements in them. It will be a valuable report. After travelling around the world a little and this country a great deal, the Committee has seen that the curriculum needs attention and that teaching methods need studying. Teachers should not fear to be formal as well as relaxed and helpful to children. Teachers have lost their self-confidence because there is no security in the methods of education. In Germany last week, I saw teachers who were secure in their attitude because they have that self-confidence.

We must accept the assessment of teachers. It is likely to be part of the Bill. I should like to see much more discussion of how the assessment should be made and who should do it. In the Select Committee I said that we did not want a creeps' charter. In my early days in teaching, I remember people who sought to obtain promotion by ingratiating themselves with their headmaster or headmistress. We do not want that. Teachers must be assessed by head teachers, by their professional peers, heads of department and possibly local inspectors. There should be much more discussion about the matter. I hope and believe that the Bill will inspire such discussion and that children will benefit.

8.43 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), and especially his comments on Sunday opening. Although there is need to get rid of the anomalies of the present Sunday trading law, a free-for-all would hurt and insult many people and organisations. When the Prime Minister spoke today about choice, she did not take into consideration all the people who would have to work in the shops, sweep the streets run the transport facilities to take people to the shops, or the police. What choice will they have? If we were to make Sunday a normal trading day, all the facilities would have to be available on a Sunday.

There is a limit to how much people can spend. There is only so much money to go round, whether it is spent during the week or on a Sunday. More money will be needed to service the facilities, so unit costs and the cost of living are bound to increase. We must study people's choices before we introduce insulting legislation. I hope that when the Government introduce the legislation they will give Conservative Members the opportunity to vote according to their consciences and their constituents' wishes.

There is a great deal in the Queen's Speech that I can support. The Queen's Speech states:

"My Government will continue to work for progress in arms control and disarmament negotiations".

It would have been better had the word "negotiations" been left out. It would then have referred to "arms control and disarmament". That would have shown a more positive attitude, because negotiations can go on for ever.

I support the proposition:

"My Government will give full support to the Commonwealth, and play a constructive role at the United Nations."

In relation to famine and other disasters, it would be better if the Government put their money where their mouth is. We should increase our overseas aid to the amount of GNP that we promised years ago to the United Nations. There are many ways of providing overseas aid. I have spoken to people from overseas who said that we should not send them grain or food but should buy goods from them to create a flow of money in their area. In return, they would buy from us and pay back their debts. There is a case for rescheduling their debts so that they can provide facilities. We should buy their commodities.

We must seriously consider wiping out some of the debts owed to the world banking system. That does not mean rescheduling the debts and lending more money, because that merely increases the interest payments that they have to make. The United Nations must seriously consider wiping out some of the debts so that those countries can start again. I was always told when I made bad mistakes that I should rub them out and start again to see what I could come up with the next time.

I also support the protection of environmental sensitivity. We made mistakes with the Wildlife and Countryside Bill by passing it too quickly. Some of the environmental provisions need strengthening. I live in a rural area and appreciate what could be done for rural areas.

The protection of animals used for scientific purposes is an admirable proposal. I hope that when the Bill is introduced the issue will not be fudged and that there will be no covering up of the subject of animal experiments to get it out of the way and off the Government's back for a while. It is a matter to which Governments will have to return time and again, because there is a massive lobby outside the House. People have a conscience about what is happening now that it has been brought to their attention. The Government should take the issue on board and not fudge it.

There is no mention of an energy policy in the Bill. Why not? It is time that we had an energy policy. It is suggested that, at the present rate of usage, oil and North sea gas will run out by about 2010. I have recently spoken to the chairman of British Gas. He recognised that by about 2010 the Gas Corporation would have to produce an alternative system for making gas from coal. It perfected the lurgi system. It is a modified form of the old German system and I believe is working and sells to some American states and Scandinavian countries. To supply the amount of gas that is consumed at present through the use of coal, 100 million tonnes will be needed, yet the NCB is suggesting that the industry will be geared to produce only 90 million tonnes. Indeed, Ian MacGregor is on record as suggesting that 71 million tonnes may be the figure to aim at.

In a talk with us, the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board gave notice that within the next eight years he will be wanting decisions or advice from the Government as to what he should do about the replacement of the present coal-burning power stations. Those stations will need to be replaced in 12 to 15 years.

Is the decision to be in favour of nuclear fuel? As I have already said, it will take 100 million tonnes of coal to produce the gas that is at present consumed, and the coal industry is now geared to produce only 90 million tonnes.

[Mr. Allen McKay]

In those circumstances, where will the coal come from? Who is to supply the CEGB? If the coal is not available, it will have to be nuclear fuel. Have the Government an energy policy that they have not yet told us about? Is it their intention to go flat out for a nuclear energy policy? The Government should come clean on that issue.

If there is to be a solid fuel programme, are we to have the fluidised bed system? If so, decisions will have to be made in the next few years. I suggest that, because of the environmental issues, we shall have to adopt the fluidised bed system. Are the Government prepared to tell the House what type of energy policy they intend to adopt after the next eight years? It is ridiculous that the NCB, the CEGB and the gas industry should not be able to come together to produce a formalised and proper energy policy.

With regard to unemployment in my constituency, the area used to depend upon the main manufacturing industries which made Britian rich for many years—fishing and textiles and, in my area in particular, steel and coal. Those industries formed the basis of the wealth of the Yorkshire and Humberside region, which is now suffering.

The closure programme in the mining industry has already cost Yorkshire and Humberside 18,500 jobs. In my constituency, 1,800 jobs are scheduled to go. That is in addition to the problems that we shall have as a result of the control of public expenditure, which the Prime Minister mentioned.

We already have the abolition of the South Yorkshire county council. Barnsley, as the county town, will suffer the greatest, after the four south Yorkshire authorities. Not only has Barnsley lost 1,800 men from the mining industry; it will lose hundreds more because of the abolition of the county. The spending power that has existed in the township of Barnsley will also be lost, because the people working for the county will no longer be there. Either they will have lost their jobs or they will have been dispersed among the four other authorities. The township will be left with all the county buildings, for which it used to get rates, but those rates will no longer be available because the buildings will be empty.

There is another problem on the horizon resulting from the miners' strike. The NCB pays its rates not on buildings but on production. There will be no money next year from that source because there was no production. It is all very well for the Government or the Minister to say that there will be compensation; but the compensation comes a year after the event. Therefore, there will be a great dip in the amount of rates that Barnsley will receive until the next year arrives.

The Government need to show a flexible approach to the problem so that the financial problems can be equalised over two years. It can be done, because farmers have that facility, but no one in industry has the facility of equalising tax returns over two years. What is to stop the local authorities having their financial problems equalised over two years? Controls on public expenditure will mean cuts in education, hospitals and health facilities.

There are also problems with the restricted drug list. I was very disappointed to receive a letter from the Secretary of State for Social Services stating that the drug Mukodyne will not be put back on the restricted list. The Secretary of State says that he has a number of advisers, but they are surgeons and people from universities. Have they ever worked in a mining or heavy industrial area? Have they ever encountered the problems that are caused by chest diseases arising from the mining industry? Only the drug Mukodyne can give relief. My father died of pneumoconiosis, and for many years the only drug that would ease it was Mukodyne. In some cases there is no other choice than to buy the drug, and it now costs about £10 every time. It has to be paid by people who cannot afford it.

Housing problems in my area have been caused by Government legislation. No new houses have been built. Repairs and modernisation have been carried out to a limited extent, but it is ridiculous that there are unemployed building workers in the private sector of the building industry and that the council has £21 million in the bank, in capital receipts, which cannot be touched. We have many houses in need of modernisation and repair, we have builders who are fully capable of doing the work, and we have the money with which to do it. Unfortunately, we have not the will of the Government to allow the work to be done.

I am not against council house sales. I like people to buy houses that they can afford to buy, but there are times when people should not be able to do it. When people come to me and ask what they should do about buying a council house, I may say, "I will tell you why you should not," or I may say, "You will be a fool if you do not buy."

The problem has arisen because of the sale of the middle band of the best of the housing stock—the pre-war council houses that were solidly built and modernised later. It is those that have gone from the housing stock. They were the seedcorn of the housing investment programme. They would have been paid for in the next five or six years, and all that revenue would have gone into the housing revenue account to provide the means of building and maintaining the next generation of houses. Selling them at a discount has cost the authority £21 million. Taking the £21 million lost on council house sales and adding to that the £21 million in the bank that cannot be touched, a total of £42 million would have been available to continue the local housing programme.

The authority has a special problem resulting from Government legislation. The National Coal Board owns vast housing estates which it would like to sell. They are in various states of repair, and the council or local authority is obliged to buy them. However, it has not sufficient funds to buy them, and even if it could buy them it could not repair them. That should be investigated.

Abolition will also affect the cheap bus fare system around which the area has been structured. If hon. Members consider what is happening in the area, they will understand why I am asking for special assistance through the rate support grant. The sports centres were built where they are because one could reach them by bus and because the bus fare was relatively cheap. Because of cheap bus fares people went to town to shop, and local shops closed. Suddenly that will be reversed. People will have to pay higher bus fares, and although it will not be impossible to get into town, they will have less to spend because they will spend more on bus fares. Moreover, the sports centres which belong to the local authority will not pay their way because people will not be able to afford the bus fare to them and the entrance fee. That problem must be considered carefully and speedily.

My local authority was led to believe that it would receive about £91 million in GREA, but it received only

£88 million. Nobody can tell the authority how much of that relates to the abolition of the county council, because the Secretary of State for the Environment has decided to use a new target system. While authorities could aim at a target and be penalised for spending above it, they are now penalised from the start. Therefore, as soon as the authority spends above the £88 million, although it is under target, it will be penalised. That could cause rate increases. Therefore, there will be increases in rates, rents, and bus fares, and no income from the NCB and other industries.

Another omission from the Queen's Speech relates to problems regarding the DHSS. We will fight a bonny battle for many weeks when the Fowler report appears as a Bill, and is debated in the House and in Committee. If anything in the Queen's Speech is distasteful, it is the decision to interfere with — not reform — welfare benefits. Housing benefits, which are paid to thousands of people, will no longer be paid, and thousands will have it reduced. Family income supplement will be altered, and family benefit, which is now paid to the wife, will be paid to the husband. We shall examine that Bill closely and fight it tooth and nail because it is so distasteful.

There is yet another omission from the Queen's Speech which I shall again try to introduce in my own way—concessionary television licences for old-age pensioners. It is time that provision for that appeared in a Queen's Speech. It is unfair that some old-age pensioners get a coloured television licence for 5p while the majority must pay the full licence fee. Old-age people's organisations are willing to have the subsidy equalised, and that should be considered. I hope that that will be included in the next Queen's Speech, if the Government have not gone to the country by then. I give my colleagues notice that when they come to power that should be part of the legislative programme in their first Queen's Speech.

9.3 pm

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn Hatfield): In assessing the overall impact of the Gracious Speech, one is drawn to two significant phrases——

"to protect areas of particular environmental sensitivity"

and

"Firm control of public expenditure."

I pay particular attention to them because they are of considerable importance to my constituents and the nation.

In the past I have referred to the green belt and National Health Service provision in so far as they especially relate to Hertfordshire. I do so again today in the context of the Queen's Speech because I recognise them as providing the markers for the coming year's events. Therefore, the debate is the opportunity to discuss their exact location.

The value of the green belt is already well understood and, any action that may allow it to become muddied by the developers' boots and threadbare in consequence must be opposed vigorously. It is a concept not to be taken in or let out a few notches at the behest of Government or local authority.

There is a belief that expansion plans for a county such as Hertfordshire should be agreed, whether or not the area in question can really be expected to absorb additional development. That is currently the case in the parish of North Mymms close to the soon-to-be-completed M25. I speak as its elected representative, although I should perhaps declare an interest as a local resident. However, such an example is by no means isolated, and the other parishes of my constituency, as I have brought to the attention of the House before, also suffer incursions of the green belt. Conservation and conservatism should be linked as one, not to be put asunder.

The considerable rise in finance for the National Health Service should also be well understood, so it is against such a background that I make a plea for a transfer of resources. The safety of the National Health Service with us should not be in doubt, but, for that safety to be complete, the changing patterns of need must be more readily considered and acted upon.

The growth in population of a county such as Hertfordshire, in part a consequence of new towns such as the two that I represent, and the expansion of villages, of which there are many in my constituency, mean that traditional patterns of spending are now outmoded. We have seen the outward movement of population from London, but it has not been matched by the outward movement of available cash.

Hon. Members have heard me speak before of the need for improved geriatric and psychogeriatric provision among other requirements. I can now report plans to expand the Queen Elizabeth II hospital in Welwyn Garden City and the redevelopment of Welfield hospital in Hatfield, which are extremely encouraging signs, as long as the necessary money is forthcoming. Caring and conservatism should also be linked as one—again, not to be rent asunder.

It is my intention to interpret

"to protect areas of particular environmental sensitivity"

in part as meaning that the green belt will remain just that. It is also my intention to interpret

"Firm control of public expenditure"

in part as meaning that NHS provision will be directed where it is most in demand. I support the Loyal Address in the sincere hope that I shall not be disappointed in those aspirations.

9.7 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I welcome the opportunity to make a brief intervention on a matter of great importance to my constituency.

I appreciate the way in which the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) seconded the Loyal Address. It was done wittily, with self-mockery and modesty, and it was extremely well put. I think that it was a slip of the tongue when the hon. Gentleman said that in Aberdeen the rate of unemployment was "only 6 per cent." Six per cent. represents nearly 8,000 people, and it shows how bad the economic problem is when "only 6 per cent." is regarded as tolerable.

I want to raise the problem of Hall Russell shipyard in my constituency, which is imperilled by the Government's privatisation plans. The Government decided some time ago to privatise the naval shipyards. That was a euphemism for privatising the profitable yards. The game plan was perfectly clear and had two purposes. The first was to make sure that private enterprise got its hands on the profits from shipyards, and the second was to have a core of naval shipyards outside British Shipbuilders making profits, with secure orders from the Ministry of Defence. That was to be contrasted with the yards of British Shipbuilders facing many difficulties over their order books. In that way, the Government could show that private enterprise works, while public enterprise fails.

[Mr. Robert Hughes]

That was a beautifully conceived package, neatly tied up, and one might say brilliantly conceived, but for Hall Russell in my constituency it was abysmally carried out. Nobody bothered to tell the Secretary of State for Defence what the game was. In April of this year the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South and I took a deputation to the Ministry of Defence to get tenders for the Navy released so that orders for the so-called OPVII, which the Navy wants, could come on stream. Two vessels were expected to be ordered this year, but we were told that the OPVII had been withdrawn from the programme because there was no money in the defence budget. Furthermore, we were told that the development of the next class of vessel, the OPVIII, could not go ahead because there would not be any money to develop it, even though it has export potential.

When the order was withdrawn from the programme, British Aerospace was negotiating with British Shipbuilders to buy Hall Russell. I do not have time to go into all the ins and outs of the different buyers who appeared on the scene and those who dropped out, but the fact is that when the prospectus for sale was issued, it looked as if there would be security of orders and employment, and reasonable prospects for profit. Without orders, there is no prospect of selling that yard. It is like a newspaper selling itself on the market and saying, "There is only one small snag — all the advertising revenue ends at the end of the month." No one can sell a shipyard or any business in such circumstances.

The problem is compounded by the fact that the Government have decided that naval yards should not have access to the shipbuilding intervention fund to help them get merchant shipping orders, except in exceptional circumstances. I can understand that. The problem is that, with no defence orders, and no access to the intervention fund for merchant shipbuilding, the yard's future looks bleak. The Government are solely responsible for Hall Russell's present predicament. That is not a political statement, but a statement of fact.

The only people who can remedy the problem are the Government themselves. I have never hidden my antogonism towards privatisation, and many shop stewards do not like it. We have set that aside. The Government have made up their mind, and we shall not quarrel about that. Our primary concern is security of employment. If we can set aside dogma, surely the Government can. Surely they can say that when they wanted to privatise the yard the situation was different, but that now neither a buyer nor orders can be found. Last week Graham Day, the chairman of British Shipbuilders, wrote to the shop stewards and said that neither British Shipbuilders nor the Government will give Hall Russell special consideration. If there is no buyer by 31 March next year, which is the final deadline for the sale, and there are no orders, British Shipbuilders will move to close the yard, and 650 people who have given loyal service to the shipyard and the nation will be thrown on the scrap heap.

We are not asking for something that the Navy does not want. It wants the ships. Therefore, in a sense I am throwing the Government a lifeline and giving them the chance to get off the hook. There are two ways in which the Government could help. They could decide to retain the yard in Bitish Shipbuilders, allow it access to the intervention fund and push hard to get orders to keep it going. Alternatively, they could release two or even one OPVII. That would let them off the hook and give them the opportunity to decide what to do about the sale. Above all, it would result in secure employment.

Last Friday, 1 November, there was a meeting in the Cowdray hall in Aberdeen, packed with over 700 people. On the platform were representatives of all shades of political and commercial opinion — the chamber of commerce, the convenor of Grampian region, Mr. John Sorrie, a stalwart Conservative, the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), a Liberal, myself and various others, including the Scottish Trades Union Congress. We were united in one demand—that the shipyard must be saved and have security of employment. The Government must act. This message came from every person, whatever his political opinion: if the Government fail Hall Russell, having put it in this peril, they will reap the whirlwind at the next election.

9.13 pm

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): In searching for that elusive ideal of beauty through brevity, I recall the remarks of one of your predecessors, Mr. Speaker: that speeches, to be immortal, need not be eternal.

I hope that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) will not mind if I do not refer to his speech. Instead, I wish to refer to the subject of some of his recent speeches outside the House. I wish to pick up the reference in the Gracious Speech to South Africa. During our summer recess there has been a trickle, turning into a flood, of international support for economic sanctions against South Africa. We must remember that we already have military sanctions against that country which, incidentally, have led to South Africa arriving in the top 10 in the world's league of arms manufacturers.

I doubt whether those who are calling for total economic sanctions against South Africa have really thought their plans through. It is extremely dangerous to single out one country to bear the world's wrath. We should remember in this Parliament that many of the 160 countries represented in the United Nations are opposed to our form of political life. It is also worth remembering that only about 30 countries have a system for changing their Governments that would reach the high standards and gain the approval of this House.

If we are to concentrate on South Africa, we should be clear what we have in mind. We should consider the economic and military strength of that country. Not only does South Africa have its own food supplies, but it exports food to the rest of southern Africa. It has vast mineral wealth which is of crucial importance to many industries in this country, particularly the aircraft industry. If we are not merely indulging in blah, blather and bluster —and many diplomats would say privately that that is what they are doing—we must realise that if one grips a man by his windpipe he will struggle. If one tries to grip South Africa through economic sanctions and threatens the very survival of an independent country, it will fight. It will become a matter of shot and shell with lives being lost. Are we proposing, in the long run, that it should be the Soviet navy, the United States navy or the Royal Navy that will carry out the task of rigorously enforcing sanctions against South Africa? There will doubtless be people who will point to Britain because we have ties with the Cape and the hinterland going back for centuries and

generations. What will be the feeling in our constituencies if British sailors lose their lives carrying out this international obligation?

I visited the complex country of South Africa for the first time in the spring, and I believe the Achilles' heel of its system is that it wishes to be a competitive industrial country. That means that it wants more qualified workers to deal with the new technology. To achieve that, it must educate its people. If we compete with South Africa as one industrial country with another it seems to me that we shall blow apart the very regime that we despise. I ask Opposition Members who call for total sanctions against South Africa whether we are more likely to end up with Left and liberal regime or a Right-wing reactionary Fascist regime in South Africa if we destroy the present state President. Who opposed the South African Government in the recent by-elections with most success? The strength of the opposition faced by that democratic President came from the Right wing, not from the Left.

In conclusion, if we in this country combine with other countries in the United Nations to impose full and rigorous economic sanctions on South Africa, we could conceivably be adding to greater repression, degradation, bitterness and bloodshed. It is just conceivable that through well-meaning idealism we would postpone the dawn of that new era in South Africa for which we yearn, hope and strive.

9.19 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I should dearly like to follow the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on the subject of South Africa, but in view of the hour I shall make a brief contribution on the subject of the inner cities and public order.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) is no longer here as I wished to compliment him on his sensitive and civilised contribution on this topic. In relation to his colleagues on the Conservative Benches the hon. Gentleman often seems to play the role of the pianist in the house of ill repute. Certainly he made a most helpful contribution today, and I hope that he will read my comments in the *Official Report*.

On public order, the Gracious Speech mentions especially the strengthening of police powers in combating disorder and also the creation of a new offence in relation to public order. I doubt whether anyone in the House would dissent from the need to assist the police effectively to police those parts of our cities which are in severe danger of falling into grave instability and insecurity. We must be careful, however, to ensure that things do not become one-sided. There can be no excuse whatever and I hope that no hon. Member will seek to produce any reason or defence for the hacking to death on the floor of an unarmed policeman — indeed, a community councillor—as occurred in Tottenham. On the other hand, attempting to support the police simply by giving them all that they ask for in a given situation may not be the best way to help them in the inner cities.

Mr. John Alderson, a political colleague of mine and a former chief constable, wrote in his recent book that the 1981 riots may well have been caused by social conditions, but they were ignited by police practice. It is to the credit of the police that they learned a great many lessons from the 1981 riots and altered their practice considerably, thus buying time until 1985. The problem is that if we simply strengthen the police in the ways that the Gracious Speech suggests without making any mention of the other side of the coin — the need to change and improve social conditions—we may be throwing away the time that has been bought by improved police practice in Brixton and elsewhere. The lessons that should have been learnt from the Scarman report after the Brixton riots were not learnt, the recommendations were not put into practice, and there is a great danger that if we emphasise just one side of the equation we shall not solve the problems of the inner cities.

After the 1981 riots, Professor Donnison predicted in an article in *The Observer* entitled "The Fire Next Time" that if we were not aware of what was happening in our inner cities riots would not necessarily be in cosmopolitan areas of the inner cities but would be in the dreadful estates that we have created, sometimes on the outskirts of our cities. That is exactly what happened four years later in Tottenham, where there are so many of the awful deck access flats which have been demolished in large numbers in Leeds, leaving us with another 45 years of debt payments on those properties.

There is a lack of understanding in the Government about the nature and feelings of inner city communities. It is not essentially a matter of throwing money at the physical fabric to change the situation. The fact that the areas concerned have bad housing, schools and hospitals does not mean that the situation would be changed overnight if we could find the money to transform the fabric.

One of the shrewdest and most aware comments on the 1981 riots appeared in *The Economist*. There was no byline to the article, but is worth noting that the author was Nick Harman. He pointed out that some of the 1981 riots occurred in areas which had the most rather than the least money poured into them. Despite all that money, those areas proved to be volatile, and they exploded. He drew attention to the fact that in many cases there was a lack of leadership in those areas because as they began to run down and the fabric started to deteriorate those in a position to do so got out. Many, however, to their everlasting credit, chose not to join the trend but stayed to give what leadership they could and to combat the conditions that those areas face.

On Monday, I had the privilege to take a German journalist around my own inner city area and to introduce him to some of the West Indian leaders at the West Indian centre. He was struck by the difference between those parts of the inner city which have retained their urban village and those which have not. Some still have the old town street and all the old choice of shops—the tailor, the watchmaker, the wet fish shop and the greengrocer. Because the area has not been demolished and rebuilt, the rents have not gone up out of all proportion. The tailor told him that he has been 41 years in business and that he has been able to carry on a small business because the area has maintained its old street, which is the focal point of the neighbourhood. The neighbouring district has been demolished and a new district centre planted there. After 6 o'clock it is dead. It is an area of insecurity and instability. The comparison was vivid.

It was interesting that the West Indian leaders told the journalist that the problems are often caused by people coming into the area from outside and encouraging an anti-authoritarian, anti-establishment view among the young people. Once this happened, their own young people

[Mr. Michael Meadowcroft]

would join in—it had a dynamic of its own. The parents were determined that the area would not be destroyed again and wished to avoid the problems of four years ago, even if it meant reporting their own children.

We must encourage and sustain leadership. We must identify the community, but not necessarily in terms merely of bricks and mortar. We must also consider the accountability of the control of the neighbourhood. It is a matter not simply of spreading administration down to the areas, but of who controls and whether people see that they have some decision-making process of their own and that they have a say in what happens in their own neighbourhood. Without such a say, as one person said, "We simply find out quicker that we cannot get our repairs done."

There is a great danger that the boiling kettle, bubbling away dangerously on the stove, will explode if the lid is pushed more and more firmly down. I beg the Government to realise that, although we must support the police, and buy time by encouraging the best kind of police, it is also vital in so many of our cities and in my area, that we restore a community spirit. That would take the heat out of the situation. It is the only hope in the future for stable and secure communities.

9.27 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I believe that most Members of the House and the majority of the nation will welcome the intention, as expressed in the Gracious Speech, to strengthen the powers of the police in order to combat the growth of violence in our streets and other major crimes, such as traffic in drugs.

However, there is one serious gap in this important part of the Gracious Speech—there is no mention of the growing and systematic abuse of the right to challenge jury-men and women. Trial by jury in criminal courts is now being disrupted so that there are far too many acquittals. This is undermining the work of the police in the promotion of law and order. The Government and Parliament must grasp this nettle, and grasp it soon.

In Crown courts, each defendant can challenge three jurors without giving any reason. This is called the right to peremptory challenge. Thus, in a multiple trial with four defendants there can be 12 challenges, and with eight defendants there can be 24 challenges. Several defence counsel continue to challenge and remove jurors until they get a jury broadly to their liking. *The Times*, in a notable leading article on 13 June, stated:

> "A pin-striped suit, an old school or regimental tie, a prominently displayed copy of the Daily Telegraph seem to provide virtual guarantee that the bearer will be excluded from the jury . . .
>
> Today peremptory challenge seems to be used by defence counsel in an endeavour to achieve as far as possible a jury composed of people believed by the defence to be likely to be hostile to the prosecution and sympathetic to the defendant."

The article concluded:

> "the right to peremptory challenge . . . ought now to be abolished."

What is now going on makes a mockery of the concept of fair trial in a Crown court. Juries are supposed to be selected at random. Historically, the right to peremptory challenge exists to remove bias. It now does the opposite, as it is used to introduce bias—a bias towards acquittal. It is therefore a distortion of the legal process.

In his book, "What Next in the Law?", Lord Denning wrote:

> "What is the justification today of the right of the accused to 'peremptory' challenges? Should we any longer permit the accused to exclude a juror simply because of his looks?"

He also wrote:

> "It is now becoming apparent that the accused, by using the 'peremptory' challenge, may seek to 'pack' the jury-box with jurors who are sympathetic to his side."

That occurred most recently in the trial of the airmen accused of spying in Cyprus. The third jury was subject to 12 challenges. It was reported that the average age of the eventual jury was 24. Nobody was more than 40 and not one wore a tie when they came in to give their verdict of acquittal. I do not blame defence counsel—they do their best for their clients within the rules. The rules are wrong, and it is up to us to change them. Lord Denning would abolish the peremptory challenge, as would *The Times*. Others would not abolish it, but drastically curtail the number of such challenges allowed, especially in multiple cases.

What is clear is that we cannot continue as we are. Until the matter is dealt with, it is as if the police are fighting vicious and serious crime with one hand tied behind their backs. The need is urgent. We should not wait until next Session's Criminal Justice Bill as it would then be the best part of two years before the necessary changes were made. The Gracious Speech says that, in the current Session,

> "Other measures will be laid before you."

I hope that swift action will now be taken.

9.31 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I approach with mixed feelings, the Government's proposals to remove statutory restrictions on shop opening hours. Although I am aware that there is no great public demand for wholesale deregulation—the Auld report mentioned that in paragraph 66—I have always supported private Members' Bills on the subject during the past eight years because present circumstances are full of unacceptable anomalies — hypocritical, unworkable, unenforceable and unfair in many ways to our non-Christian ethnic minorities and to tourist areas, such as mine, where trading and job opportunities are being missed.

I am a regular church attender and I appreciate the Church's worries about Sunday trading. However, I have to recognise that, despite legislation in support of Sunday observance, church attendances are falling. I understand that about 10 per cent. of the population attend. It appears that compulsion has bred complacency. In Scotland, where there is no compulsion and where what the Government propose has long been the norm, church-going is higher, faith is stronger and the character of the traditional Sunday is no different from that in England and Wales. We heard confirmation of that earlier from the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray).

As a Christian, I believe that the state should not impose Sunday observance. It should be a matter of personal conviction. It worries me and many of my constituents who have written to me that jobs and prospects will be put at risk if people, when asked whether they are prepared to work on Sunday, refuse on religious or family grounds. I shall have to be satisfied that our employment protection legislation will be more than adequate and on the side of people who place the fourth commandment—the fifth in the Roman Catholic Church—before their job.

9.34 pm

Mr. Mike Woodcock (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I welcome the commitment in the Queen's Speech to continue to encourage the growth of new jobs. The Government's present policies are the only means of creating real and lasting jobs. Moreover, free trade is in the interests of Britain and the developing world.

I wish the Government to consider more closely the activities of our multinational companies, which could create more jobs in the United Kingdom. The Government should consider the amount of imports by United Kingdom domiciled car manufacturers. Together with many of my constituents, I am concerned at the level of imports by General Motors. In the past 12 months that company has imported into Britain over 120,000 vehicles under the Vauxhall badge — many of them from Spain. Those vehicles are sold to the public, who largely believe them to be British-made, which they are not. Many of the vehicles could be produced in the United Kingdom in the capacity available at the company's Ellesmere Port plant. That could provide hundreds of new jobs. I am suspicious that General Motors is not playing fair. I suggest that the Government take a long hard look and introduce the necessary fiscal measures.

I wish the Government to consider oil refining in the United Kingdom. We all agree that North sea oil has been a major success story. It has given us great national advantages. The oil industry is a fine example of efficiency, entrepreneurial drive and achievement, and it deserves encouragement, but there is a danger that those who take oil from the North sea may not be making the investment required to ensure that United Kingdom refining capacity matches production. I hope that the Government will become more interested than they appear to be and that they will take action to ensure that those who share in the North sea oil upstream bonanza will play their part in creating jobs in the downstream part of the industry.

I welcome the proposed legislation to encourage private sector involvement in the ownership and management of council housing estates and to improve the planning system. These have not been mentioned so far in the debate. Successive Governments have discouraged the private rented sector by more Rent Act protectection and rent controls. The result is that investment in the private rented sector has almost dried up. The sector continues to decline as prudent landlords realise that the only option open to them when a property falls vacant is to sell, and would-be tennants find it increasingly difficult to find a home.

Although a property-owning democracy should be the cornerstone of housing policy, many people — young single persons, students and temporary residents—need rented accommodation. Many people are prepared to invest in the provision of that accommodation. These two groups should come together for mutual benefit. They could make a significant contribution to solving the nation's housing shortage. However, the Rent Acts prevent this from happening. I hope that the proposed legislation will not only encourage private investment in council housing, but that it heralds the long overdue reform of the Rent Acts.

It is clear that the bureaucracy of the planning process and the attitude of some local authorities are unfair burdens on business. They discourage enterprise and the creation of new jobs. Therefore, I hope that the proposed improvements to the planning system will be fundamental and orientated towards enterprise and job creation.

I welcome the intention to improve the management of our schools and to promote the increased effectiveness of our teachers. Parents in Britain are increasingly concerned about what is happening in our schools. Education costs £10 billion a year, half of which is spent on teachers' salaries. Education is an investment in the future, but value for money is required.

Most of our teachers are excellent, but much in society works against them. Many have been deprived of the sanction of corporal punishment. They are not always supported by education authorities when they take a firm stand on discipline. Some are even accused of racism when they say what they genuinely believe about education standards in multiracial schools. But teachers have no right to use pupils as pawns in an industrial dispute, especially where action is intended to cause the maximum disruption to the education of our children, at minimum cost to those taking part.

We need a clearer definition of teachers' professional responsibilities, a curriculum that is more relevant to the needs of industry and commerce and more accountability from teachers, with regular assessment of performance. In almost all successful commercial organisations, those in responsible positions have long accepted the need for performance review. Pay, promotion and even job security should be based on performance. No one in the public sector has a right to a job for life, with regular pay increases and promotion, irrespective of performance. I hope that the legislation that is introduced will deal with those points.

Finally, I welcome the measures intended to strengthen police power to combat public disorder and modernise the law on public order offences. During the past months the nation has been shocked by scenes of violence on our streets. Some say that this results from divisions in society, from unemployment, from the drug problem, from the alienation of young coloureds or even from police methods and attitudes. But no amount of alienation can justify what we have seen — a policeman killed, children below working age committing vicious attacks on those who are trying to restore order, and businesses, homes and cars set ablaze. Petrol bombs, acid and knives have no part in peaceful protest and no place on the streets of a democratic nation. Such behaviour demands swift and firm responses. It does not demand soft policing. It does not demand the creation of no-go areas. It demands firm policing, a stiffening of the law and a firm response by the courts. My constituents want a firmer approach to law and order. I hope that the measures mentioned in the Gracious Speech will provide that firm response.

9.41 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): The Gracious Speech is a lesson to us all in being succinct and brief, and I shall endeavour to be so tonight. However, some of my colleagues may wish to take up some of the points that I shall make. I was relieved to hear that the Gracious Speech was not tainted by the suggestion that we should televise the proceedings of the House of Commons. That is the silliest suggestion I have heard since I have been privileged to be a Member of the House. However, I am sure that the subject will be debated later in the Session.

[Mr. David Amess]

With hon. Members, I listened to the Gracious Speech to learn of matters that would benefit the country and my constituency, and in both considerations I was not disappointed. The most important part of the speech dealt with economic policy and the battle to create more jobs for those who wish to work. I welcome the Government's commitment to continue their economic policies: the defeat of inflation, lower taxation and the encouragement of enterprise. They are right to continue their policy of privatisation, which has already proved to be extremely successful.

Mr. Murphy: Does my hon. Friend agree that the new towns in the south-east have been noticeably successful in attracting new businesses, which has had the benefit of creating jobs for our constituents? Will he comment on that with regard to Basildon?

Mr. Amess: My hon. Friend and I both represent new towns. In my constituency, I am privileged to work with an extremely dynamic development corporation, which has done a magnificent job, since it was set up in 1948, of attracting new businesses to the area. I am privileged to represent a constituency that has the largest covered shopping centre in Europe. Many new businesses, including Alders and Toys 'R' Us have come to Basildon, and there is no doubt that the efforts of the development corporation have produced many new jobs. Great credit should go to that organisation. My constituency has enjoyed great success in the development of small businesses.

Every hon. Member is rightly concerned about unemployment. However, Basildon has enjoyed considerable success. A survey conducted by the Department of Employment shows that in my constituency unemployment has fallen by 5·8 per cent. during the last year. I pay tribute to all those who have contributed so magnificently to the creation of new businesses and therefore more jobs in the area.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important to create new businesses in order to generate more employment, but that communications are also very important in East Anglian constituencies? Therefore, we must do more to encourage road building and increased airport facilities. More employment opportunities could be created in Norwich if communications were improved.

Mr. Amess: My hon. Friend makes a valuable point. Both he and my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) enjoyed the benefit of an Adjournment debate in the autumn of 1984 on precisely that point.

We must concentrate upon developing better communications. My constituency has benefited from the extension of the M25 motorway. Furthermore, a Channel tunnel would create many more new jobs. My constituents would benefit from the construction of a Channel tunnel.

I had hoped that the Gracious Speech would refer to legislation to prevent political propaganda from being a burden on ratepayers. Both my constituents and I feel strongly about this issue. The Socialist district council is faced with self-inflicted rate capping. There are other projects upon which that money could be better spent.

Mr. Murphy: Does my hon. Friend agree that a number of Socialist councils, his as well as mine, are wrong to spend ratepayers' money on advertising campaigns that attack proposed Government legislation and on promoting such fanciful and useless ideas as nuclear-free zones? Ratepayers' money could be far better used for the benefit of the people these councils seek to represent. Alternatively, such high rates might not have to be levied upon ratepayers.

Mr. Amess: My hon. Friend raises a number of interesting points. My constituency is a nuclear-free zone. The leader of the local authority must originally have had a telephone conversation with Mr. Chernenko and ultimately with Mr. Gorbachev to arrange, in the event of a nuclear attack, for those weapons to be directed in such a way as to avoid Basildon—a ridiculous suggestion. My local authority wasted £5,000 on that propaganda exercise.

My most serious concern is that the local authority has employed a communications organisation which has budgeted to spend £150,000 on political propaganda. Through our doors in Basildon we receive an information sheet which tells the good residents what the local authority is up to, but when I won the Basildon seat it did not even mention that I had been elected as the Member for the constituency.

Mr. Allen McKay: The hon. Gentleman is talking about political propaganda paid for out of the 2p rate under section 137, but authorities such as mine spend that 2p rate on employment strategy. When the metropolitan county councils are abolished, the 2p rate will not be available and there will be no money for the employment strategy. Is there not room for manoeuvre there?

Mr. Amess: The hon. Member makes a sharp point. I sat with him for 150 hours in the Committee on the Rates Bill in the previous Session and I know that he is an expert on that subject. However, his intervention does not detract from the fact that many of my constituents feel that the money spent on propaganda could be better spent in other areas of great need in Basildon.

Morning, noon and night, I meet business men who say that the rates that they pay are critical in their survival. The smaller the unit, the more important rates become. Business men in Basildon tell me that they are extremely worried about the high rates.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Does my hon. Friend agree that business men in Norwich and Basildon are upset not only about high rates imposed by Labour authorities, but about the forms that they have to fill in when they hope to undertake work for their local councils?

I have recently been shown forms produced by Norwich city council that run to five or six foolscap pages. The business people have to fill in detail after detail which has nothing to do with the contract in question. I cannot imagine why councils should want that information. Perhaps my hon. Friend knows why councils are collecting all that information from business people.

Mr. Amess: I find all that rather sinister. Such practices were being carried out by the GLC, but, as that council is to be abolished next year, we need not worry about that. Business men with small work forces find it difficult to cope with the extra burdens on their time that are imposed when they have to fill in very long forms. Half

the time, the information is of no value and I wonder to what end it is used. Perhaps Labour Members can tell us whether that information is stored in their central buildings. Will it be unleashed before the next general election?

Many of my constituents and people throughout the country will welcome the measures to strengthen the powers of the police in combating disorder—balancing freedom of speech and the right to protest with effective police powers. We in Essex are particularly delighted that the Government are to legislate against the drugs menace which confronts our society. I am also delighted that the Government are to take powers to trace and confiscate the proceeds of drug traffickers. It is a serious problem which worries many of my constituents.

The Still Waters centre for the rehabilitation of drug users in Basildon is under threat of closure. I send a gentle message to the Minister concerned that the centre urgently needs extra funds. It does a valuable job for my constituents.

Mr. Jessel: What did my hon. Friend mean by the right to protest? Freedom of speech, the freedom to try to persuade people to one's view and to hire a hall in which to do that is a right which one should expect in a free society, but surely it is a different matter for people to hold up the traffic and to cause a nuisance to thousands of others who have the right to move about freely. Why should the right to freedom of speech imply a right to cause disruption?

Mr. Amess: That is a telling point. My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) has a legal expertise which I do not have at my fingertips. We all know in our hearts of hearts what is meant by sensible protest. The disgraceful scenes of the last few weeks and months should certainly not be condoned.

Britain is a nation of animal lovers. Many animal lovers live in Basildon. I look forward to the Government introducing a Bill to protect animals used for experimental or other scientific purposes. Hon. Members regularly receive postcards from constituents who are worried about tests on animals. I hope that the Government's proposed legislation will outlaw many cruel practices and certainly the disgraceful placing of gas masks on dogs' faces to discover the effect of smoke on their lungs. I hope that legislation will cover that disgraceful practice.

All that glitters is not gold. To emphasise that, I express my grave reservations about the proposed Bill to remove statutory restrictions on shop opening hours. I realise that I must wait to see precisely what is proposed, but I and many of my constituents do not want legislation to destroy our traditional Sunday. I am particularly worried about the added strains upon shop workers to compete. I represent a constituency with the largest covered shopping centre in Europe, so that the issue is of great concern.

I also regret that the Government seem unable to find time to promote legislation to protect the unborn child. It was clear by the vote last year that the country believes that we need such legislation. If this House cannot protect the unborn child, it is sad for democracy. If an hon. Member who wishes to promote such legislation is lucky in the ballot, I hope that the Government will not be obstructive.

I have attempted to introduce Bills to protect horses, ponies and donkeys and to reduce the minimum age at which a person can stand for Parliament from 21 years to 18. I hoped that my attempts would have encouraged the Government to promote similar proposals, but obviously I shall have to be more persistent and persuasive.

I was surprised by the criticism of the Leader of the Opposition of certain aspects of the Gracious Speech. However, I suspect that much of that criticism was offered without conviction. The legislation to which we can look forward in the coming Session will be good for the country and for my constituents.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Silentnight (Industrial Dispute)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

10 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I regret that the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) cannot be here tonight because of illness, even though I know that we would have been on opposite sides in the debate. I am sure that all hon. Members wish him a speedy recovery.

The debate arises from a dispute at Silentnight, which I believe highlights the weakness and folly of the Government's policy on industrial relations and unemployment. The issues have implications for workers in many companies, other than those workers on the front line at Silentnight. If there is not an acceptable settlement to both sides, the question must be who will be affected next.

The dispute has had political overtones from the start. Tom Clarke, the chairman of Silentnight Holdings, is on record as saying that if any of his factories became unionised he would either close them or break the unions. That man owns 52 per cent. of the shares in the group and is currently the highest paid company director in the United Kingdom. It is no co-incidence that he is a prominent member of the Conservative party, and until relatively recently was president of the Skipton Conservative Association.

In 1983 the Prime Minister called Mr. Clarke, "Mr. Wonderful". During the opening of the new showrooms at Salterforth she said:

> "I wish there were a lot more people like you and the kind of people that work for you, pulling together, not apart."

I wonder whether she and the Government still feel that he is Mr. Wonderful. Perhaps they do, because he is working in accord with the worst of Tory Government policy.

Early this year the union agreed with management to forgo the pay rise due in February for four months, in return for a no redundancy agreement to run for the current year. During the first week of April the management broke the agreement and declared 52 redundancies. It is a clear case of management disregarding the agreement. It also shows the fallacy of the Government's policy that low pay will save jobs. I have never believed that to be true, and this case proves it. It will be a clear warning to other trade unionists in other factories. One of the Government's main planks in their policy for solving unemployment is the suggestion that low pay is the key. This case shows that they are guilty of having no real policies or intention to reduce unemployment.

Although 58 people volunteered for redundancy, only eight were acceptable to the management, leaving the remainder to be chosen by the company. The union conformed to trade union legislation and balloted its members. By a vote of two to one, in a secret ballot, 540 of the 800 work force who voted gave the union a mandate to take action up to and including a strike. However, the workers did not immediately strike, but chose to work to rule.

On 10 June the management, at three sites, simultaneously gave an ultimatum to the workers to increase production in 10 minutes or be suspended. Two hundred workers were suspended, and the others walked out. The strike has now lasted for 22 weeks at Barnoldswick and Sutton—an area which is known for good industrial relations and which has been a key factor in bringing new industries to that part of the country.

On 22 July, following the local holiday fortnight, the strikers were sacked. They had been told during the holiday to return on that date or be sacked. Since then, the management has claimed that there is no dispute. What nonsense that is. Does the management really believe that it can sack those workers and then claim that the dispute is over?

The second key factor arises from the Government's trade union legislation. If the union had not balloted its members, it could have been taken to court and fined. What about the reverse position? It shows how one-sided is the Government's policy and how anti-trade union they are. It cannot be said that what is happening will help to promote industrial harmony.

Having been a shop steward for a number of years, I know that, despite what is stated in the media, trade unions do not wish to bring factories to a standstill. Both sides of industry, perhaps for different reasons, in almost all cases have an interest in keeping production going. Steve Burns, the factory convener, has no desire to see the factories close, which is a different view from that taken by the chairman in his desire to defeat the trade union movement. The convener's view is shared by all the strikers whom I have met.

The company refused to go to its industrial conciliation machinery. It refused to agree the terms of reference, wanting to limit the terms to the pay offer. The management also refused to go to ACAS, and it recently blocked an attempt, led by the Leader of the Opposition, to get ACAS involved again in an effort to get both sides together. The management also refused the offer of a local vicar to mediate in the dispute. It all shows how little desire it has to resolve this dispute on an amicable basis.

Last week the management published a press statement, probably forced on it by the knowledge of tonight's debate. Both the full version of the statement and an abbreviated version — many hon. Members will have received copies — are misleading and contain many inaccuracies. While time does not permit me to deal with them tonight, I must refer to one. That was the case of a striker who returned to work to find that his job had been put on to a new time basis. To get the same wage as he had received before the annual pay rise, he needed to produce 30 per cent. more. The result was that he lost £25 a week. That shows how misleading are the company's claims in the press release about local agreements on the payment by results element of the workers' pay.

It must be said that on the Lancashire side, at Barnoldswick, the policing has been sensible and impartial. Indeed, the convener has conveyed to the chief inspector of police at Colne the appreciation of the strikers over the way in which the policing has been carried out at that site. The same cannot be said of Sutton, only a few miles away, where the policing has been provocative and has only helped to aggravate the situation.

Mr. John Watson (Skipton and Ripon) *rose*——

Mr. Pike: No, I shall not give way.

Police dogs have often been on site, and that has done nothing to help resolve the dispute. Out of seven arrests at the Sutton site, to the best of my knowledge, the first two to appear in court have been acquitted. I hope that

when replying to the debate the Minister will give a commitment that the Government will go into all the papers relating to the dispute. I hope that he will also consider at this stage a reference from the Government to ACAS to look once again at the issue, following the lead given by the Leader of the Opposition in an effort to get both sides together to resolve the dispute.

The Government should think again about their whole trade union legislation, because the dispute highlights the problems that will arise from their policies, which are provocative rather than designed to lead to harmony. We must ensure that protection is given to workers when involved in disputes such as this. Whereas penalties are imposed on trade unions, the management can take whatever action it wishes without fear of being challenged in court or of being fined.

This style of management is not acceptable in 1985. Do the Government take that view? Perhaps the Government share Silentnight's view and believe, in their desire to crush trade unionism, that anything is acceptable. Do they desire to return to the Victorian relationship between management and workers, when the employees were the workers and the employers were the masters? That is not acceptable in 1985. We require Government policies designed to achieve industrial harmony so that we can get on with solving the real problems facing the nation.

This dispute has implications far beyond Barnoldswick and Sutton. Indeed, it has implications for trade unionists throughout the country. The Government must think again, and I hope that they will intervene and get both sides together.

10.10 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), who has worked so tirelessly on behalf of the strikers at Barnoldswick and Sutton, for giving me the opportunity to speak in this debate. I am also glad to see among my many hon. Friends my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), who has constituency work at Sutton, and my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), the Labour party's shadow employment spokesman.

The Minister knows east Lancashire and the furniture and bedding industry well. He was instrumental in helping to set up a little Neddy for the bedding and furniture industry. He is aware that the area and the industry have an unrivalled industrial relations record. East Lancashire communities and firms see themselves as families, and the idea of the family has been a powerful one for 40 years within the industry. It is therefore doubly tragic that this bitter dispute should have occurred, but the fact that it has, that quiet, decent people should have resorted to the strike weapon and now face great poverty while conducting a strike, should serve to underline how badly relations must have deteriorated to provoke such a serious occurrence.

What are the implications of the dispute for the Government's industrial relations policies? In my judgment, they are two. First, there is the question of even-handness in the approach of Ministers to strikes and industrial relations law. Secondly, there is a need for strengthened conciliation and arbitration machinery and the generation, by Ministers, of a climate in which the use of such machinery is encouraged.

No Government have placed industrial relations at the heart of their whole approach to this problem more than this one. Trade union legislation—so-called trade union reform—has been pushed through the House in virtually every one of the past six years. Central to that legislation has been the concept of balloting, especially pre-strike ballots.

The union at Silentnight held a proper pre-strike ballot. The ballot, a copy of which I have, was clear. The validity of that ballot, which could have been challenged at any stage, has never been challenged because its terms and the result were clear.

Mr. Watson *rose*——

Mr. Straw: The union won a majority for industrial action and a strike took place. Wherever pre-strike ballots have led to no-strike decisions, Conservative Members and Ministers have been quick to applaud the trade unions' decision against strike and their so-called responsibility. The Conservative party, in its last manifesto, said:

> "All of us have a vital interest in ensuring that this power is used democratically and responsibly."

The Government clearly anticipated that there could be a democratic and responsible pre-strike ballot in favour of a strike. This is one such occurrence. I ask the Minister why, when the Government are so ready to aplaud the result of strike ballots which go against strikes, should they be silent when a democratic and responsible ballot leads to strike action? Do Ministers not understand that, if they wish to encourage responsibility in industrial relations, they must be even-handed? If they wish people to have faith in the machinery that they have established and the idea of balloting, they must applaud it when it works, even if it works against what they see as a narrow position; otherwise people are bound to have the view that the idea of balloting—so dear to the hearts of Conservatives—is a cynical manoeuvre not to enhance, but to undermine, trade union rights,

On the issue of even-handedness, if it is true that the company has been losing so much money that it cannot afford £200,000 to pay the claimed wage increase, was it not morally wrong for it in the same year to pay an unchanged dividend which ensured that the family shareholders alone received three times the amount of the pay rise—£600,000?

The dispute raises the issue of the Government's attitude towards conciliation machinery. The bedding and furniture industry, under clause 24 of its national agreement, has well established conciliation machinery. The union has always said that it is ready to submit the dispute to conciliation or arbitration.

The company has been ambiguous, to say the least, in its attitude to conciliation. For four months it remained silent. Now, because of public pressure, it has started to send circulars to Members of Parliament. It is clear from those circulars that the company has been very misleading in its offer to put the matter to conciliation, because it involved terms of reference that were wholly impossible for the union to accept. The company refused the idea of conciliation without preconditions. It is clear from the circulars sent out by the company that there are so many points of dispute with the union that the only way to solve the problem is by arbitration and conciliation.

Are we to hear from the Minister this evening that he supports the idea of conciliation and arbitration in the settlement of the dispute? We do not want to hear from the Minister as a mouthpiece for the company, however close his personal association, and that of other hon. Members,

[Mr. Straw]

with Mr. Clarke. We want him to use the power of his office, in the great tradition of his Department, to secure conciliation and arbitration and an end to this grave and damaging dispute.

10.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. David Trippier): There is no doubt that the dispute that occurred at the Silentnight bedding factories at Barnoldswick and Sutton this summer, and its sad consequences, are a matter for regret on both sides of the House, as well as for the people concerned.

The company has for many years been a successful one in terms of profitability and providing jobs for about 2,800 people in the group as a whole. It is very sad that the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) did not pay tribute to Tom Clarke, who was solely responsible for setting up the company in the first place, and his success in developing the company. I know that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) referred to the matter when he wrote his article in *The Times*. He mentioned that Mr. Clarke had set up the company 40 years ago in a very modest way, but he quickly went on to rubbish the fact that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had praised Mr. Clarke.

My right hon. Friend was right to praise Mr. Clarke. We need more people like Tom Clarke to form businesses and expand in the way that he did. It has been an incredible achievement. It has been of great benefit to the company, to the employees and to the local community. Therefore, it is all the more unfortunate that it did not prove possible for both sides to resolve their problems satisfactorily before matters reached the sorry conclusion that we are discussing today.

As all too often happens in situations of this kind, we have seen and heard some wild statements about the circumstances of the dispute and seen some silly conclusions drawn from it. We are doing nobody any favours—least of all the workers concerned—in turning to those issues with the blind passion and rhetoric that we have heard tonight.

Inevitably, some of the facts in the case are disputed, but I shall try to set out my understanding of what occurred. In December 1984 the joint industrial council for the bedding industry agreed an increase in the minimum rates of hourly and weekly pay for its workers. The average production earnings at Silentnight beds were at that time significantly above the minimum rates fixed by that agreement. Unfortunately, the company was already experiencing difficulties, and during January this year asked the work force to forgo any increase in wages for three to four months. The company says that it undertook during that time to attempt to avoid any job losses. The union claims that there was a "no redundancy" guarantee. I am told that that is incorrect.

In April this year the company announced that there would have to be 52 redundancies to reduce overheads and improve the prospect of a return to profitability. In the event, there were only three compulsory redundancies. Nevertheless, a go-slow began at the factory, and the Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union balloted its members on the question of strike action. Those who voted split three to two in favour of industrial action

"up to and including a strike"

although it seems that there was by no means a majority of the work force in favour of a strike.

Hon. Members who have spoken have made a great deal of the ballot that was held. It says something for the improvement in industrial relations practices under the Government that the union saw fit to ballot its members at all, but the question on the ballot paper did not make it clear, as required by the Trades Union Act 1984, that the industrial action proposed to the membership would involve them in breaching their contracts of employment. Furthermore, the ballot paper referred generally to the

"action of the company in refusing to honour the 1985 wage award for the bedding trade"

which is a highly partial account of what the strike action, which eventually followed, was about.

In further discussions with the union the company agreed to pay the rates set out in the agreement, backdated to the first full pay week in January. Unhappily, that concession did not resolve the dispute. The union appears to have expected that the increase in minimum rates provided for in the national agreement would automatically be reflected in increases across the board. The company's position is that it has honoured the national agreement in full, and that it cannot afford a more general increase.

Mr. Straw: It is a disgrace.

Mr. Trippier: Attempts have been made to refer the matter to the bedding industry's conciliation machinery, but the parties have not been able to agree to terms of reference. *[Interruption.]* The majority of my information is straight from ACAS.

Discussions were held with officials of ACAS, but clearly they did not resolve the matter. On no fewer than four occasions after the ballot the company wrote to its employees warning them that those who were taking industrial action were in breach of their contracts of employment. In the last two letters, written on 4 and 17 July, the company warned that those who did not return to normal working on 22 July would be dismissed. Many did not return to work, and on 25 July the company dismissed 346 employees — not 500. At present picketing continues, and claims for unfair dismissal will shortly be brought before an industrial tribunal by some of the workers concerned.

The hon. Members for Burnley and for Blackburn, and the local Labour party, have sought to make political capital from the Silentnight strike. In an article in *The Times* the hon. Member for Blackburn stated that there had been no mobs, no mass pickets, no baton charges, and no cracked heads, but, miraculously, he failed to refer to the masked men who ambushed two vehicles belonging to Silentnight a week before the article was published.

The hon. Gentleman failed to refer to the stone catapulted at one vehicle, which penetrated one of the vehicle's body panels——

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): That has not been proven.

Mr. Trippier: Nor did the hon. Gentleman refer to the three men with stockings or balaclavas covering their heads who ambushed one of the firm's delivery lorries on the main Keighley to Skipton road at Junction Cross Hills. Two windows of the lorry were smashed by stones, but fortunately the driver escaped unhurt.

Mr. Prescott: Did ACAS tell the Minister that?

Mr. Trippier: I appreciate that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) is desperately trying to intervene. I welcome the fact that he is present, because I shall refer to an article in *Socialist Worker* which referred to him. It is entitled, "Wake up John", and states:

"Labour shadow employment spokesperson John Prescott really should read *Socialist Worker*.

At the TUC conference John repeatedly referred to the 530 — the number is going up all the time — strikers from Silentnight's Barnoldswick and Sutton factories as picketing 'Sleeptight'."

A month later at Bournemouth he continued stirringly to argue the case of the Sleeptight strikers. To give credit to his hon. Friends, at least they got the name of the company right.

If we are to discuss the facts of the case, let us discuss the full facts. Why did the hon. Member for Blackburn not refer to the paraffin bomb which was hurled at the Sutton premises after the police had tried to calm a group shaking the perimeter fence? All of that, and more, was recorded in the local newspaper, the *Craven Herald and Pioneer* on Friday 11 October—[SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: "It is not proven."] Are the hon. Members for Burnley and for Blackburn associating themselves with the Socialist Workers party, which has tried to inflame the situation with two publications, which are again recorded in the *Craven Herald and Pioneer* on that date? One, headed "The Silentnight Striker", is described in the publication as, "produced by militant supporters", and the other is a letter headed, "Socialist Workers Party", and subheaded,

"How do we beat the bosses offensive?"

The letter attacks not only my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and Mr. Tom Clarke, the chairman, but the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Prescott: What is the Minister going to do about it?

Mr. Trippier: Unlike Mr. Clarke, the right hon. Gentleman is not even afforded the courtesy of his christian name or, "Mr.". He is referred to only as "Kinnock", and is accused of spending more time attacking the miners' picketing than trying to win support for them.

Mr. Straw: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Trippier: With respect, I shall not give way, as I have a lot of ground to cover. I noticed that the hon. Gentleman did not give way to my hon. Friends who were trying to intervene.

I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Burnley said at the outset of his speech. It is with genuine sadness that I find he has raised this Adjournment debate at a time when my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, who knows more about the background to the strike than the hon. Gentleman or the hon. Member for Blackburn will ever know, is in a hospital bed recovering from a serious operation.

The hon. Member for Blackburn referred to the dividend paid by the company to its shareholders and suggested that it could have been used to meet the union's pay claim. Well-paid jobs are not conjured from thin air. They exist in part because people, such as Tom Clarke, set up firms in the first place and because shareholders are prepared to risk their capital and thus contribute to the company's growth and success. The company has to balance paying more wages today against providing secure jobs for tomorrow. I wish that more companies, trade unions and Opposition Members were more aware of the need to get that balance right. In any case, one cannot compare one dividend distribution paid out of past profits with a commitment to pay higher wages for the indefinite future. In any event, the hon. Member for Blackburn chose to ignore the fact that the company had waived the distribution of the dividend from 1945 to 1972. The company has recently announced its half-year results, showing a loss before tax of over £800,000. Nevertheless, it is continuing production. It employs more than 700 workers, including the majority of the original work force, and hopes to be back in profit before the year end.

Some Opposition Members do not like the fact that production at the factory continues and that the majority of the company's original workers are still in employment. That single fact — that the majority of the workers continue in gainful employment — is one of the few good features of the dispute. Industrial action has destroyed so many jobs over the years that we must take some comfort from the companies, production and jobs that have survived.

What are the lessons of the dispute? The first—it is a tragedy that we have not learnt it already—is that it is disastrous to believe that there is a God-given right to automatic increases year after year in our average earnings regardless of whether the market exists for the goods that we produce and how profitably we produce them. I am genuinely sorry for the 346 workers who have lost their jobs in such a public way. However, unlike Opposition Members, I am also thinking of the thousands, perhaps millions, who have lost their jobs, without anything like as much publicity, because their employers pandered to the naive belief until it was too late.

All of us have a responsibility. The Government have constantly urged pay negotiators to negotiate with an eye to the consequences for jobs. Clearly, we have to try harder to get that message across. Employers need to redouble their efforts to involve their employees and keep them informed of the business realities on which their future depends.

The second lesson is that no Government can alter the fact that strikes put jobs at risk. The law cannot keep jobs open for people who break their contracts of employment. That is the principal point that was missing in the addresses that we heard from the hon. Members for Blackburn and for Burnley. That principle has been recognised under successive Governments, both Labour and Conservative. What the law can and does do is to protect individuals on strike from selective dismissal, which is a quite different matter.

The third lesson is that, although Governments cannot change the realities of life, they can give back to individuals the responsibility for deciding for themselves how to face them. The Government have given union members the right to be consulted before a strike is called. That may seem a modest achievement in the context of this case; none the less, it is a real achievement. I do not think that anyone seriously believes that a yes vote in a strike ballot — even in a ballot conducted within the law — automatically means that an employer has to accept whatever the union demands. Whatever the deficiencies of the ballot, the workers at Silentnight were consulted before putting their jobs at risk by striking. It is now their right to choose. Many decided to take that risk. Whatever

[Mr. Trippier]

Opposition Members may now like to pretend, the risk was there when the Labour party was in power; the right to choose was not.

In short, 346 people have lost their jobs. Against that, 700 people are working and hope to be working profitably next month. It is not easy to draw up a balance sheet of the effects on people's lives of such disputes or——

The Question having been proposed at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 7 November 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Park Lane Hospital, Liverpool (Restricted Patients)

2.34 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith) (*by private notice*) asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his decision to reveal the details of a patient whose application for release from Park Lane hospital, Liverpool, is due to be heard at a mental health review tribunal on Monday 11 November.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is charged by Parliament, inter alia, with responsibility for the discharge and recall of restricted patients and is accountable to Parliament and the public for the exercise or refusal to exercise those powers. Since 1983, mental health review tribunals have also had the power to discharge restricted patients. On 9 April 1984 and subsequently on 4 July 1985 in answer to questions from the hon. Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett), I indicated in the case of the restricted patient referred to in the hon. Member's present question that the then Home Secretary and I took the firm view that that patient was not fit to be released into the community. On 30 October 1985 I gave full details of the discharge and recall of another restricted patient in answer to a question from my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival). The matters contained in those answers are on the public record and the propriety of giving those answers has never before been challenged. Subsequently, I drew attention to them in the course of a discussion with a journalist which touched on a number of matters of current concern.

Mr. Soley: It is important to point out that this question does not concern itself with the individual who has been named by both the Minister and the press—it concerns the law and the way in which the law has been used or misused by the Minister.

Does the hon. Gentleman accept that we in this country do not want trial or tribunal by press, and that the *Daily Mail* was used by him to strike terror into the hearts of people, even though he has other ways of achieving his aims and ambitions? Was not the law changed by this Government in order to make sure that cases such as this were judicial hearings, as the Government were obliged to do by the Strasbourg decision? Are not both the Minister and the *Daily Mail* in contempt of the Mental Health Review Tribunal Rules 1983, in particular rule 21(5) which states:

"Except in so far as the tribunal direct, information about proceedings before the tribunal and the names of any persons concerned in the proceedings shall not be made public"?

As the tribunal did not so direct, the Minister is in breach of the Act. In view of the Prime Minister's remarks yesterday about the importance of upholding the rule of law and respecting the courts, we want to know whether the Minister will resign.

Mr. Mellor: He will certainly not resign. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman has put a novel proposition to the House. The restricted patient who was the subject of his question made an application to a tribunal in November 1983 and that tribunal was finally disposed of on 1 August 1984. During the time that matter was before the tribunal, a question was asked by the hon. Member for Barnsley, East and I answered it on 9 April 1984 stating categorically the Home Secretary's view that the man was not fit to be released. No question about the propriety of that answer was raised either after it had been given or by the officers of this House. The individual concerned made a further application for a tribunal in December 1984, and that tribunal is due to consider the application on 11 November 1985. I answered that question on 4 July 1985 in the terms I have already indicated without any suggestion that this was in breach of any rules.

It is an extraordinary assertion that it is perfectly proper to give an answer in this House but apparently not proper to respond to a journalist's question about that answer. I understand that the hon. Gentleman is an advocate of open government, and he seems to be quite remiss in challenging this particularly encouraging example of it.

Sir Ian Percival (Southport): Does my hon. Friend accept that the vast majority of people believe that, when Home Office Ministers have cause for concern that the release of a prisoner would bring danger to innocent people, they have a duty to voice that concern and the reasons for it as fully and as publicly as the law permits?

The majority will hope that those who have to make such difficult decisions will pay careful regard to that concern and will always put first the safety of those who would be at risk if there were a release.

Is my hon. Friend aware that I should not be content with anything less than the full answer that he gave me about a man who was released from Park Lane nearly six months ago and has now been recalled? Is he further aware that my constituents and I are grateful to my hon. Friend for his concern about the dangers to potential victims and for doing something about it?

Mr. Mellor: I am much heartened by my right hon and learned Friend's remarks and I am grateful to him. I am particularly encouraged because of his knowledge of our law. For the reasons that my right hon. and learned Friend gave, the proposition advanced by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) is strange because he knows that the Secretary of State still has the jurisdiction that he has always had and is accountable to the House for the exercise of that jurisdiction. His jurisdiction is in no sense ousted by the existence of a parallel jurisdiction over parts of the matter by a mental health review tribunal. If the hon. Gentleman's assertion were right, a grave error would have been made by the authorities in this House in allowing to be tabled and fully answered such questions about a matter of grave public concern relating to public safety and the release of two serious sex offenders. Between November 1983 and today there would have been

[Mr. Mellor]

a period of only three months within which I or my right hon. Friend would have been answerable to the House for the exercise of our powers. That simply cannot be right.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I accept the natural public concern about the possible release of someone involved in the murder of a child, but why has the Minister decided to fight his battles in public via the press instead of coming to the House with evidence if he sincerely believes that the mental health tribunal procedure is not working adequately?

Mr. Mellor: I am heartened that the hon. Gentleman thinks it understandable for concern to be expressed about the release of child sex murderers. I am sure that is a step in the right direction for the Liberal party. As to what might or might not have been said, I have already made it clear that what I said to the journalist echoed and repeated matters which had already been laid before the House. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has a good point.

Business of the House

2.43 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Will the Leader of the House make a statement on the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): As the House is aware, the debate on the address in reply to the Gracious Speech will be brought to a conclusion on Wednesday 13 November.

The Business for the remainder of the week will be as follows:

THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER—There will be a debate on a Government motion to take note of European Community documents in relation to the draft budgets of the European Communities for 1985 and 1986. Details of the documents concerned will be given in the *Official Report*.

FRIDAY 15 NOVEMBER—There will be a debate on road safety on a motion for the Adjournment of the House, the First Report from the Transport Committee 1984-85 (House of Commons paper 103-1 to 3) and the Government's observations (House of Commons paper 553) will be relevant.

MONDAY 18 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Local Government Bill.

The following European Community documents will be relevant to the debate on Thursday 14 November:

(a) 5874/85	*Letter of amendment No. 3 to the preliminary draft budget for 1985*
(b) 6378/85 6379/85	*Draft general budget for 1985*
(c) 6882/85	*European Parliament's amendments and modifications to the draft budget for 1985*
(d) 6907/85 to 6914/85	*Council's decisions on the European Parliament's amendments and proposed modifications*
(e) 7882/85 and COM(85)325	*Key figures for the 1986 budget*
(f) COM(85)175	*Preliminary draft budget for 1986*
(g) COM(85)550	*Letter of amendment to the preliminary draft budget for 1986*
(h) 9336/85	*The draft budget for 1986*
(i) 8479/85	*Charging food aid expenditure under the budget*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee

(a) HC 5-xvii (1984-85), paragraph 3
(b) HC 5-xxi (1984-85), paragraph 7
(c) HC 5-xxiii (1984-85), paragraph 2
(d) HC 5-xxvii (1984-85), paragraph 3
(e) HC 5-xxv (1984-85), paragraph 2
(f) HC 5-xxx (1984-85), paragraph 16
(g) HC 5-xxx 1984-85), paragraph 16
(h) HC 5-xxxi (1984-85), paragraph 7
(i) HC 5-xxxi (1984-85), paragraph 5

Mr. Kinnock: Press speculation is that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will come to the House next Tuesday to inform us of the contents of the Government's autumn statement. If that is correct, will the Leader of the House ensure that we have a full day's debate on the statement rather earlier than was the case last year, when we had to wait until 6 December?

Earlier this year I asked a number of times when the House would be able to debate the televising of our

proceedings. Can the right hon. Gentleman give a firm date for that debate because there is widespread interest in the House?

There are disturbing reports that the Sunday trading legislation will be introduced in the House of Lords. If that is so, the Opposition will strenuously oppose such a move.

The Prime Minister yesterday acknowledged that the matter would cause some difficulty—her words—to her hon. Friends. Is the decision to start the legislation in another place an attempt to give the Chief Whip of the Conservative party more time to soften opposition from his own Benches?

On 25 July, in a reply to my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), the Leader of the House said that he would ask the Foreign Secretary to comment on the Third Report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. When will there be a debate on that report, which was published on 22 July? Important minority and majority elements are involved.

I note that there will be a debate on the Local Government Bill on Monday week. Can the right hon. Gentleman explain why no mention of that Bill was made in the Gracious Speech? Was it because he feared that it might have consitiuted political advertising?

Mr. Biffen: On the right hon. Gentleman's last point, I confess that I cannot immediately think of a compelling reply, but doubtless one will be forthcoming from the relevant Minister when the Bill is debated.

Taking the right hon. Gentleman's points in reverse order, I shall consider a debate on the report of the Select committee on Foreign Affairs. Doubtless the matter can be considered through the usual channels.

As to the shops Bill, I noticed that the right hon. Gentleman yesterday demonstrated a rather charming poetic side to his nature, and he has allowed that romanticism to run a little further this afternoon. There is no question of the government having difficulty with the Bill. The recommendations of the Auld report were confirmed by 304 to 184 votes in the last Session. I know that poetry often finds it difficult to accommodate pure arithmetic, but that is how the matter stands

As to my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary wanting time to secure his ends, I can only say that he is possessed of that most enviable of qualities, instant charm, so we foresee no difficulties. However, having said all that, this matter can be discussed through the usual channels if it causes deep anxiety to the right hon. Gentleman.

I hope to refer to the question of televising the House when I reply to the debate on the Loyal Address. However, I wish to say here and now that I hope that a debate will take place this month.

I am happy to confirm that the autumn statement will be presented on Tuesday, conforming with last year's practice. I recognise the very real interest of the right hon. Gentleman in having a debate as early as is reasonably practicable, having regard to all the interests in the House, which include the Select Committee. I hope that we can consider the matter amicably through the usual channels.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): On the autumn statement, will my right hon. Friend take fully into account the fact that the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service will no doubt wish to take evidence from officials and the Chancellor and then report as soon as possible? Obviously, it greatly benefits the House to have the Select Committee's report before the autumn statement is debated.

Mr. Biffen: I recognise my right hon. Friend's point at once and acknowledge the most constructive role that he has played in these matters. I know that he will understand that there is a general interest in the House in debating the autumn statement reasonably soon because of its high political interest.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): In view of the Government's statement over the weekend that they were concerned about the failure of the South African Government to allow journalists to report upon the troubles in the black townships, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that a statement is made on that important matter next week?

Mr. Biffen: I think that tomorrow's debate is related to foreign affairs, and the hon. Gentleman's point could well be made then.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): Is my right hon. Friend aware that for once—and I hope for the last time—I am in agreement with the Leader of the Opposition that it would be wrong if the Government originated the legislation on the shops Bill in the House of Lords? I hope that my right hon. Friend is aware that Conservative Members feel as strongly as Opposition Members about that measure. Can we have some reassurance from him today?

Mr. Biffen: I recognise the point that my hon. Friend makes, and that is why I said that it was a matter for the usual channels. After all, there is the consideration that a good sound majority in this House could disarm the bishops.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In response to the Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Gentleman gave an emollient answer about the debate on the report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. Might it be helpful if, before that debate, the Leader of the House arranged for the Government to put in the Library a copy of Sir John Nott's first draft on the events of 4 May 1982, which was withheld from the Select Committee?

Mr. Biffen: I shall look into that matter.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): In the light of continuing rumours that increasingly serious consideration is being given in Government circles to the possibility of Britain joining the European monetary system, may we have a debate, if only a three-hour one, on that subject before any final decisions are taken so that those of us who would have grave misgivings about the wisdom of such a course might deploy our arguments?

Mr. Biffen: I shall not comment on the merit of what my hon. Friend is arguing, but he will have plenty of opportunity to make his propositions to the Chancellor next Wednesday.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House make the necessary arrangements for a debate on the financing of political parties? Is he interested to learn that during the recess—I like to keep the right hon. Gentleman up to date—I happened to spot that the alliance received £2,500 from General Accident, a

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

company that is trading in South Africa, is paying poverty-stricken wages, is refusing to abide by a reasonable code of conduct and is not answering letters on this subject? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it would be a good debate if we could persuade to take part in it the leaders of the Liberal party and the SDP, to both of whom I have written asking them to send this dirty money back to the dark alleyways of South Africa from whence it came?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner: I gather from Mr. Speaker's remark that the Chair would like me to conclude my remarks on this issue, probably because both leaders are missing from the Chamber; I am told that a bit of a quarrel is going on. In such a debate it would be interesting to hear the views of the leader of the SDP, because in response to my letter he said——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Leader of the House can answer only for himself. He cannot answer for other people.

Mr. Skinner: The Leader of the House is showing great interest in the matter that I am raising, Mr. Speaker, and I am anxious to get the facts right. The leader of the Social Democrats said, in effect, "I am not sure that what you have said is true". But the Leader of the Liberal party in effect answered, "Yes, it's true, but it was only a teeny little bit of money."

Mr. Biffen: I am absolutely fascinated by that contribution and I should like to be as forthcoming as possible in response to it, but the hon. Gentleman will realise that the Government have only a limited amount of time at their disposal. He will be aware that last Session the House, in its wisdom, made time available to those sitting below the Gangway, and I am sure that there will be widespread interest in how that time is utilised by them, whether they choose to use it to vindicate the action that the hon. Gentleman has described or whether they find some other way to explain that extraordinary behaviour.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): When the promised debate on televising the Chamber takes place, can it take place in circumstances that will prevent the House from being hoodwinked? In other words, can it be with the full panoply of lights, so that hon. Members can see how intrusive the lights are and how substantially they raise both sorts of temperature in the Chamber—and pander to certain hon. Members who like self-seeking publicity?

Mr. Biffen: It has been my experience that on this topic the imagination of hon. Members is brilliance enough.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): The Leader of the House will be aware of the considerable anger that is felt among teachers about the treatment that the Government have meted out to them in the last nine months. Will he arrange for the Secretary of State, either in his speech on the Address on Monday or in a statement next week, to come forward with some positive proposals to settle the teachers' dispute?

Mr. Biffen: I could not for a moment accept the description of the teachers' dispute as portrayed by the hon. Gentleman, but I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend to the point he makes, particularly as he will be taking part in the debate on Monday.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): The word "unique" is over used and abused, but does my right hon. Friend accept that the manner, extent and size of the decision about the Channel tunnel that the Government must take is an especially unusual one? Can he say how the Government propose to handle the matter in the House? Is there to be a debate before the decision is taken? In the light of the timetable that has been announced there is not much parliamentary time left before that major decision is reached.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes an extremely valid point. It echoes a question that was put to me a short while ago. I am in contact with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, and I hope to be able to make a further announcement fairly soon about the timing.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): May I refer the Leader of the House to our previous exchange over ex-far eastern prisoners of war and the forgotten army, and pay tribute to him and say how much I appreciate his letter, in which he outlined the extent of the problem, which involves 58,000 people? I have now written to the Prime Minister to ask whether she will kindly receive a deputation, but, failing progress on that, may I ask whether there is any possibility of the Leader of the House providing time on the Floor of the House for a debate on the subject of the treatment of ex-prisoners of war?

Mr. Biffen: I am afraid that I cannot offer the prospect of Government time devoted specifically to that debate, but I suggest that it would make an admirable subject for an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Does my right hon. Friend believe that there should be a debate as to whether this democratically elected Parliament should continue to submit itself to the will and whims of an appointed bench of judges the other side of the Channel, and, if so, when should that be?

Mr. Biffen: I cannot offer an early prospect, at least, for such a debate in Government time.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Will the Leader of the House arrange for himself, acting in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on Privileges, to make a statement next week, if not now, on the departure from the normal arrangements for the way that Select Committees are being organised, because the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), a member of the Select Committee on the Environment, has published his minority report and draft amendment to the majority report of the Select Committee on the Environment's inquiry into the disposal of nuclear waste, without the majority report having been finished, let alone circulated? That draft minority report and amendment to a non-existent majority report has been distributed to people outside the House but not to members of the Select Committee.

Mr. Biffen: All I can say is that what goes on in Select Committees is even worse than what goes on in the usual channels. The hon. Gentleman mentioned privilege. He will appreciate that there is a means whereby a claim that a privilege is breached can be referred. It does not involve me.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the Leader of the House aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) has raised an important and grave matter? The recommendations of that Select Committee, which met to deal with those matters, included changes and those changes must be approved by Parliament. When does the Leader of the House intend to secure time for a debate on that report so that we shall be able to examine in detail what happened when the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) leaked a report which is doing substantial damage to industry within the county of Cumbria? It can only be perceived, in all reality, as a hysterical over-response and misunderstanding of the essential issues in the nuclear debate.

Mr. Biffen: I have a vested interested in conciliation. I believe that the matter should be kept in a reasonable perspective and, I suggest, in the first instance, that the matter should be referred to the Chairman of the Liaison Committee.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Is it because "winter is a'comin in" that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has gone into early hibernation and fallen silent on the subject of aid to farmers devastated by the summer weather?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the request for more grants to the farming community.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Will the Leader of the House take urgent steps to remedy the present unsatisfactory position whereby the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs has now only eight full members. I should be grateful if he would take those steps.

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what the hon. Gentleman says but I should not like to say anything that gave him encouragement.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Will my right hon. Friend please accept that there is widespread concern over any possibility of Sunday trading, and that in the General Synod of the Church of England only one member voted for Sunday trading? Therefore, will he please ensure —and I support what my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) said—that there will be a debate in this House rather than in the House up the Corridor? Will my right hon. Friend also ensure that there will be a free vote, because it is a matter of conscience, and that cannot be overlooked.

Mr. Biffen: I note the Soviet-like majorities being secured in the General Synod on a topic which, on many other tests of opinion, seems remarkably popular. However, I note what my hon. Friend said, and I shall be discussing it through the usual channels. The matter of voting is for the Patronage Secretary.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): In view of the very serious decisions that have already been taken and are being implemented concerning the steel industry, will the Leader of the House tell us when we can look forward to a debate, especially on the proposed closure of Gartcosh? Will he accept that such a debate would give my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) an opportunity to explain how prosperous the steel industry was when he was a member of the Government, compared with the way things are today?

Mr. Biffen: It would have to be a very extended debate to secure that ambition. On Tuesday, the debate on the Queen's Speech will cover industrial and employment matters, and that would be a very suitable occasion on which to raise the question.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Will the Leader of the House prevail upon the Secretary of State for the Environment to come to the House, if not this week, next week, to make a statement on Liverpool city council?

Mr. Biffen: I shall pass on that request. Meanwhile, I am sure that my right hon. Friend will have noted, as I have, that the hon. Gentleman has an Adjournment debate on the topic on Monday 18 November.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is widespread concern in the north-west about the proposals put forward by the metropolitan borough councils in the Greater Manchester area for the future running of the Manchester international airport? Will he pass on the fears of many Conservative Members to his right hon. Friend and ask for an early statement?

Mr. Biffen: I will most certainly comply with that request.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Could you confirm to the House that you have received a formal letter from me with a privileges complaint against the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), and that my complaint is based on the fact that he has indicated the deliberative position of the Select Committee on the Environment on a particular issue?

Mr. Speaker: I confirm to the hon. Member that I have received his letter and that I shall be considering it.

BILLS PRESENTED

Agriculture

Mr. Michael Jopling, supported by Mr. Secretary Younger, Mr. Secretary Edwards, Mr. Secretary King, Mr. Secretary Baker, Mr. John MacGregor, Mr. John Selwyn Gummer and Mrs. Peggy Fenner, presented a Bill to make further provision relating to agriculture and agricultural and other food products, horticulture and the countryside; and for connected matters: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed [Bill 2.]

Okehampton Bypass (Confirmation of Orders)

Mr. Secretary Ridley, supported by Mr. Secretary Brittan, Mr. Secretary Baker, Mr. Kenneth Clarke, Mrs. Lynda Chalker and Mrs. Angela Rumbold, presented a Bill to confirm, for the purposes of the Statutory Orders (Special Procedure) Act 1945, two compulsory purchase orders made by the Secretary of State under the Highways Act 1980 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 for purposes connected with the construction of the Okehampton Bypass: And the same was ordered to be considered tomorrow and to be printed [Bill 3.]

Northern Ireland (Loans)

Mr. Secretary King, supported by Mr. Ian Stewart, Dr. Rhodes Boyson, Mr. Nicholas Scott and Mr. Richard Needham presented (under Standing Order No. 111

(Procedure upon Bills whose main object is to create a change upon the public revenue)) a Bill to increase the limit imposed by section 1 of the Northern Ireland (Loans) Act 1975: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed [Bill 1.]

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Secretary Baker, supported by Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary Younger, Mr. Secretary Edwards, Mr. John MacGregor and Mr. William Waldegrave, presented a Bill to require rating authorities to set a rate on or before 1st April; to prohibit political publicity and otherwise restrain local authority publicity; to require the mortgagor's consent and make other provision in connection with the disposal of local authority mortgages; to amend the Local Government Act 1972 as regards the allowances paid to members of certain authorities; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed [Bill 4].

MUSEUM OF LONDON

Mr. Richard Luce, supported by Mr. Secretary Baker and Mr. John Moore, presented a Bill to make provision with respect to the composition and functions of the Board of Governors of the Museum of London and the funding of the Museum: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed [Bill 5].

ARMED FORCES

Mr. Secretary Heseltine, supported by Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary Fowler, Mr. Solicitor-General and Mr. John Stanley, presented a Bill to continue the Army Act 1955, the Air Force Act 1955 and the Naval Discipline Act 1957 and to amend those Acts and the Armed Forces Act 1976 and the Armed Forces Act 1981: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed [Bill 6].

Business of the House

Motion made, and Question proposed.

That—

(1) Standing Order No. 6 (Arrangement of public business) shall have effect for this Session with the following modifications, namely:—

In paragraph (3) the word "twelve" shall be substituted for the word "ten" in line 52; and in paragraph (6) the word "nine" shall be substituted for the word "ten" in line 77;

(2) Private Members' Bills shall have precedence over Government business on 17th, 24th and 31st January, 7th, 14th and 21st February, 11th, 18th and 25th April, 2nd and 9th May and 4th July;

(3) Private Members' Notices of Motions shall have precedence over Government business on 29th November, 6th and 13th December, 28th February, 7th, 14th and 21st March, 16th May, and 6th June and ballots for these Notices shall be held after Questions on Wednesday 13th November, Wednesday 20th November, Wednesday 27th November, Wednesday 12th February, Wednesday 19th February, Wednesday 26th February, Wednesday 5th March, Wednesday 30th April and Wednesday 21st May;

(4) On Monday 16th December, Monday 10th February, Monday 12th May and Monday 7th July, Private Members' Notices of Motions shall have precedence until Seven o'clock and ballots for these Notices shall be held after Questions on Thursday 28th November, Thursday 23rd January, Thursday 24th April and Thursday 12th June;

(5) No Notice of Motion shall be handed in for any of the days on which Private Members' Notices have precedence under this Order in anticipation of the Ballot for that day.—*[Mr. Biffen.]*

3.3 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): The motion—which the Leader of the House has just motionlessly made — relates to the availability of time for legislation initiated by Private Members. There arose, in the course of the last Session, a question in that context to which I believe the House will wish to give consideration and on which it will wish to arrive at a decision, namely, whether it ought to be possible for Private Members of this House, given sufficient support, to obtain the same facility as the Government have in relation to their own legislation, of extra time for the measures to be disposed of.

It is not, I think, a matter which the House would, at this stage and on this motion, wish to debate, but it is customary for the Leader of the House, in winding up the debate that is about to be resumed, to make certain remarks regarding the House and its procedures. I would be grateful if the right hon. Gentleman were able to include a helpful reference to this matter when he comes to reply to the debate next week.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for having given me motice that he would raise this matter. I am happy to confirm that I would like to touch upon the topic in my reply on Wednesday. Whether my remarks are helpful is a matter which depends very much on the ears of the receiver.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[SECOND DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [6 November]

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament—*[Sir Reginald Eyre]*:—

Question again proposed.

Home Affairs

3.5 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I must confess to some mixed feelings about the load of legislation which we in the Home Office have put upon ourselves in the coming Session. However, I have no mixed feelings about the subject for debate on the first day of the debate on the Gracious Speech. I welcome the chance to say something about how we see our work in the Home Office.

I shall comment briefly, if it seems sensible to the House, on the four Bills which appear in the Gracious Speech as the responsibility of the Home Office and then give the House a topical account of how I see one of the main jobs, or perhaps the main job, of my Department, which is its overview of policing in England and Wales.

Two of the Home Office Bills to which reference is made in the Gracious Speech relate to animal experiments and shops, and both have some points in common. They will both contain proposals for well-founded and well-researched reform. In both instances the present law is creaking badly and is becoming steadily more difficult to apply. In fact, the two statutes are worn out. In both instances there is genuine controversy and high feelings which have been, and certainly will be again, reflected in debates in Parliament.

If the Government were feeble and exhausted, we would have decided to leave these matters untouched. They would have come under the heading "Too difficult". In that event, the deterioration and the impracticability of the present law would have continued. Instead, we have decided that the time has come to grasp both subjects.

There have been some exchanges already this afternoon about Sunday trading, but I think that everyone, whatever his or her own view, accepts that the existing law is riddled with anomalies. It is widely disregarded and enforced patchily and without enthusiasm by local authorities. The Government sought advice from an independent committee, which concluded that the present law, the 1950 Act, was past patching. There will be plenty of opportunity to debate the issue fully. As the House knows, the Bill will be straight forward. It will be based on the recommendations of the Auld report, which the House has already debated.

I recognise that many are concerned sincerely that the measure could affect the Sunday, which provides a break in the rhythm of weekday life. I see the Bill much more as being in harmony with our general views on freedom of choice. It seems rather important that we should not end up replacing an old muddle with a new one. The Government's scheme, as the House will see, is relatively simple. I hope that Parliament will find that to be one of its attractions.

We shall introduce a Bill on animal experiments, which will replace entirely the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876. That Act has deserved a long life. The controls within it have turned out to be adaptable to the great changes and advances in science since its enactment, but the time has come to change it. The complexity and scale of experiments has increased enormously and a new system of control is necessary. There is much public interest and concern. We have published two White Papers on the matter, one in 1983 and one in 1985. We have consulted widely, and our proposals have been welcomed widely.

We want to enact new arrangements that will strike the right balance between, on the one hand, the need to minimise animal suffering and, on the other, the need to maintain the advance of science and medicine. I hope that our proposals will provide a firm structure for future control and the encouragement of alternatives to animal experiments. I hope that the Bill which, although it is complicated and will arouse feelings, will be supported by the House.

There are also two Home Office Bills that fall within the general rubric of law and order. I am glad that there has already been, from the Leader of the Opposition, from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and others, a general welcome for the principle of the Bill that provides for the confiscation of the proceeds of drug trafficking. There are important points here, which the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) illustrated in a speech in Oxford the other day—a speech that I read with care. These important points are embedded in the Bill, but it fits, and necessarily fits, into our general strategy on drugs.

As the House knows, much has already been done to reduce both the supply and demand for drugs. As a result of the measures that have been taken, the number of heroin seizures tripled between 1982-84 and in 1984 the quantity of heroin seized was 50 per cent. higher than in the preceding year—nearly as much as in the whole of the United States during the same period. The number of people convicted of drug trafficking last year was more than 4,000, which is an increase of 800 on 1983, and the number of adult drug offenders in prison in England and Wales rose by 600 from September 1984 until last June.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that one of the reasons for the increased statistics in respect of the amount of heroin seized is the dramatic increase in the amount of heroin that is coming into the country anyway but is not being seized? Is it not the same percentage volume seized of a much bigger inflow, and is that not true of the statistics about people arrested and imprisoned? Should not the Government make major resources available and do something on the international scene to prevent drugs coming into the country?

Mr. Hurd: We are doing that. We have to operate on three main points. They are the point of production—countries, mainly in the Third world, where the drugs are

[Mr. Hurd]

produced—the point of entry and the point of sale and consumption. We have already appointed a minimum of 150 extra preventive customs staff for next year. A further £2·4 million is being provided to help to eradicate the opium poppy in Pakistan. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary was in that country the other day to help that plan forward. We are doing something similar with cocaine production in central America.

The confiscation Bill is the next and crucial step. It will create a new offence of handling the proceeds of drug trafficking. It will give new powers to obtain information about their movement or disposal. The courts will be empowered to freeze the assets of those accused of drug trafficking, and required to impose on those convicted a confiscatory fine equal to the full amount of their proceeds from trafficking. For this purpose there will be available a presumption that anybody convicted of drug trafficking had derived all his assets from trafficking save in so far as he showed the contrary. These provisions are necessary and will, I hope, be widely supported as a proper and vigorous response to a menace which has destroyed many young lives and families in all parts of the country.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Has my right hon. Friend seen the action taken by the Malaysian Government in trying to deal with this problem—action that can be described as draconian but which has had a dramatic effect?

Mr. Hurd: From what I have heard and read of such measures, I am not sure that they would commend themselves entirely to the House. I shall look into the matter further.

The public order Bill, the fourth Home Office Bill, is the result of long thought and wide consultation. I see that it has absurdly been suggested that the Bill has been thrust forward at the last minute for some obscure political purpose. Whatever criticisms the Bill may attract, undue haste in its preparation is not one of them.

The review of the public order law was announced by my noble Friend Lord Whitelaw in June 1979. We published a Green Paper in June 1980. Also in 1980 the Select Committee on Home Affairs published a report on the law. In 1981 there was Lord Scarman's report on the Brixton riots. We have taken account of the lessons of later disorders, such as those during the miners' dispute. Finally —this is very important—we have had the benefit of the 1983 report of the Law Commission on the common law offences of riot, unlawful assembly and affray which we shall be largely following.

Our proposals were published in a White Paper last May. As we said then, we are in no doubt about the importance of the principles at issue. The rights of peaceful protest and assembly are among our most fundamental freedoms. When the House sees the Bill, I hope that it will agree that we have sought to provide a balanced, legal framework in which the police have the necessary powers to prevent and deal with disorder while these fundamental freedoms continue to be safeguarded.

There will be a new traditional requirement—already found in many local Acts — for the organisers of marches to give advance notice to the police, but with an exception for marches organised at short notice in response to an emergency event. The existing powers of the police to impose conditions on marches to prevent serious public disorder will be widened to enable them to prevent marches which are likely to cause serious disruption to the life of the community or the coercion of individuals. Similar preventive powers will apply to static demonstrations and assemblies in the open air, but there will be no extension of the existing power to ban marches, nor any power to ban static demonstrations.

Mr. Ron Lewis (Carlisle): Can the right hon. Gentleman undertake that marches organised by the Salvation Army will be exempted?

Mr. Hurd: There cannot be exemptions for classes of marches because of the nature of the organisation that organises them. If the hon. Gentleman knows of any inconvenience or difficulty that the Salvation Army has experienced in organising its marches, I am sure that he will let me know.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Can the right hon. Gentleman explain what kinds of events he has in mind? Do they include a group of workers who are suddenly dismissed by their employer and who are so annoyed that they decide to have a march in the vicinity?

Mr. Hurd: I have tried to explain that the kind of march which is already included is one which could bring about serious public disorder. We are talking about the power to impose conditions, not about the power to ban marches. We propose to widen those conditions to include marches which could cause serious disruption to the life of the community—for example, by blocking a crowded street or by the coercion of individuals through bullying or harassment.

In addition, there will be a new offence of disorderly conduct, punishable by a fine, to provide protection against acts of hooliganism which cause alarm, harassment or distress and with which the police cannot deal adequately at present. The House will want to look at the details of this new offence. However, as the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said in the House when the matter was first aired, we all know that there are vulnerable families, such as the elderly and ethnic minority families, whose lives can be made a misery by persistent harassment. The postbags of many hon. Members, as I know from the letters that they send me, clearly reflect this reality.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): When dealing with static demonstrations, or happenings, will my right hon. Friend consider looking at the powers of local authorities over very large gatherings of people in the countryside, such as large pop festivals on agricultural land where they have never been held before, which might bring in 50,000 or 80,000 people?

Mr. Hurd: I know that that has traditionally been a problem at Stonehenge, I know from a letter that I received recently that it is a problem in Staffordshire and I know that it is a problem in my hon. Friend's county. It is a difficult issue, because it involves the law of trespass, which we are not proposing to tackle in the new Bill. However, I am trying to see whether we can do something about the problem, though at the moment I have no great expectation of success.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Home Secretary talks about provocation, but will he find time in his legislation to prevent chief constables from making

provocative, party-political statements, as the chief constable of Greater Manchester and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis do frequently? I am sure that the Home Secretary agrees that we do not allow senior civil servants or senior military figures to make the sort of political statements that unelected and unaccountable chief constables are prone to make these days.

Mr. Hurd: I am delighted that chief constables find their voices from time to time. They are perfectly capable of looking after themselves in any controversy that may result.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The Home Secretary will know that disorderly conduct is probably the most controversial of the offences that he proposes to include in the new Bill. Can he give the House a general assurance that we shall not have another offence like those that have caused enormous trouble to the courts and individuals because they are unspecific and ill-defined? Laws that give the police a discretion to choose who is in breach of them and who is not—because the offence is so badly defined—have given us terrible trouble and caused great feelings of injustice. We have just abolished the sus law and we need an assurance that we will not have another of the same sort, which courts will not be able to deal with.

Mr. Hurd: It is because I knew of that argument that I said that the House would want to look carefully at the way in which the clause was drawn. The hon. Gentleman, with his experience, will know that there are examples of causing harassment, alarm and distress to people that fall outside the 1936 Act and are not necessarily liable to cause a breach of the peace. There is a gap and the hon. Gentleman will want to look carefully at the clause to see whether we have filled the gap adequately.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I have been listening to the questioning about the public order legislation. The right hon. Gentleman has explained that it started with a Green Paper and has come through a Law Commission report and a White Paper and there were the happenings of last year. The discussion could go on for ever. Will the Home Secretary have a word with the Leader of the House? Two or three proposals in the Bill lend themselves to a Select Committee-type procedure. We could take evidence from chief constables, lawyers and others. Before the Bill came to the Floor of the House we could have covered the five-year period during which people may have changed their mind. Would not that be a better way of proceeding?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will have heard the right hon. Gentleman's suggestion and, as it comes from someone with authority in these matters, no doubt my right hon. Friend will ponder it.

The Leader of the Opposition dealt yesterday, as some of his colleagues have before, with the figures of recorded crime and it is only right that I should deal with the matter. I shall try to do so—I may not succeed—in a way which the House will find to be fair. When we discuss this subject, we are talking about figures of recorded crime and there is some evidence from the British crime survey that the public may be more inclined now, possibly largely for insurance reasons, to report crimes such as burglary, than they used to be. *[Interruption.]* I mention that point because statisticians think that it is important. I do not make too much of it, or rest my argument on it. I mention it for the sake of completeness.

The essential point, which I hope that the whole House will accept, is that the statistics for recorded crime show a steady rise since the 1950s. There have been ups and downs in particular years, but the annual average increase in that decade was 5 per cent., whereas from 1960 until now it has been between 6 per cent. and 7 per cent.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): What about the figures since 1979?

Mr. Hurd: I am not trying to diminish the facts. I am simply stating the figures. We are dealing with a trend that has gone on for 35 years through successive changes of Government, a trend which is deeply worrying precisely because it is so continuous. The figures that I gave earlier relating to drugs show that a new and quite big element of drug-related crime is beginning to affect totals both for the prison population and for recorded crime statistics.

The statistics for different countries are not comparable, but the trend that I have described is not confined to this country. It exists throughout Europe and the United States.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): None of us underestimates the difficulty of the job that the Home Secretary has taken on, but his party gave the public impression that it could reverse or at least substantially reduce that trend by measures such as the short sharp shock, its attitude to imprisonment, and so on. That has not happened.

Mr. Hurd: I intend to deal next with the measures that we have taken since 1979 and what we propose to do about them, because that is the next logical step in the argument. First, however, I should point out that the roots and causes of crime have always been and probably always will be a matter of argument. That point surfaced yesterday and will no doubt come up again today. I think that all the Opposition parties tend to put more emphasis than we Conservatives do on the link that they see between crime and unemployment, bad housing and other forms of social deprivation, whereas we put perhaps more emphasis than they on the decline and sometimes the collapse of family life, the relaxation of discipline and the disappearance of a spirit of community whether in the towns or in the countryside.

That argument emerged in the debate on the city riots and it will no doubt continue, but I hope that we can all agree, as the Leader of the Opposition did yesterday, that once crimes have been committed they must be dealt with firmly under the law and that the police and the courts, whose duty it is to do that, should have the full support of every law-abiding citizen and every democratic party. It would be a poor day if that statement became a matter of debate in the House or in council chambers.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is a question not just of dealing with crime but of dealing with it relatively swiftly? At present it seems to take for ever for a case to come to court, by which time the evidence may be so rusty and fusty that convictions which perhaps should have been secured cannot be secured.

Mr. Hurd: Many of us are worried about the delays in bringing cases to court. My noble Friend the Lord

[Mr. Hurd]

Chancellor has put new resources into accelerating the course of justice, and this month we have started field trials in several parts of the country to see whether we can move somewhat nearer to the Scottish system in which there is an absolute limit to delays in bringing offenders to trial.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I have said time and again in the House that if there were more provision for summary trial, cases would be tried more swiftly, but there is virtually no provision for a summary trial covering more than half a day. Does my right hon. Friend agree that if there were provision for such trials to go on for two or three days, much of the problem might be solved?

Mr. Hurd: It is no secret that we are thinking in terms of introducing a Criminal Justice Bill in the next Session. If my hon. Friend would like to develop that argument between now and then, we will consider it.

We are not asking the Labour party—it would be silly to ask it—to relax its views on the Government's social and economic policies, but I ask Labour Members to see whether they can join us and the vast majority of our fellow citizens in supporting the police in debate in the House, in towns, schools and all the places where the police are trying their best to uphold the law and to protect our constituents.

We have put together a strategy of which the three main elements are strengthening police resources, crime prevention and the relationship between the police and the public. Since May 1979, police manpower — police officers and civilian staff — has increased by some 13,000. At the end of September, there were 120,500 police officers in England and Wales, supported by some 39,000 civilian staff. More than 800 police officers were recruited in September—the highest intake in one month for four years. In the past six years, approval has been given to increases of some 3,400 additional police posts in forces in England and Wales.

I have had discussions with Sir Kenneth Newman, the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis, and I have authorised him to recruit up to his full establishment of 27,145. I have also authorised an increase of nearly 50 in the civilian staff ceiling next year for further civilianisation. I have told him that I am prepared in principle to agree to an increase of 50 officers in the police establishment next year to strengthen his efforts against drug trafficking. He has told me that he expects that 200 officers will be brought back into operational use as a result of the force reorganisation that he has in hand.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): What positive steps will the right hon. Gentleman take to recruit more police from the ethnic minorities? Does he agree that current figures are appallingly low?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is quite right; the number is far too low. Numbers have improved substantially, but from a very low base. Every police force is aware of our wish that it should open its doors—obviously without lowering standards, as the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) said yesterday—and recruit as widely as possible in the black and Asian communities.

Mr. Blair: But what steps will be taken?

Mr. Hurd: We have to consider value for money in the police service as elsewhere. The police service understands that, and much is being done in forces throughout the country to improve management and the use of resources. I have set in hand work to assess whether further increases beyond the current Metropolitan police establishment are needed. I must not think only of London, however. I shall also be ready to consider applications from provincial police authorities for increases in police establishments on the basis of demonstrated need. I said recently that I was ready to approve increases of 200-plus nationally to help in the fight against drugs.

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): One of the worrying increases in crime concerns the variety to be found in the City of London—I refer to big City fraud, which is sophisticated and extremely difficult to detect. The undermanning of fraud squads in terms of numbers and expertise is an important factor in the increase of such crime. What steps is the Home Secretary taking to strengthen that arm of investigation?

Mr. Hurd: I agree about the importance of this matter. When the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, the City of London police or police forces in other areas recognise the need to strengthen fraud squads, they will no doubt come to me and make their case. I will then consider it.

Under our law, the police must use no more than the minimum necessary force. The violence during the riot at the Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham reached new levels of ferocity and I believe that the police must be properly equipped to deal with such violence. The commissioner is reviewing urgently the tactics and equipment necessary in such circumstances. I shall see that those requirements are met.

Therefore, the needs of the police change as the situation changes, and we have to respond to that. However, I emphasise, in view of some things that have been said and shown on television, that we do not want to alter, and the police do not want to alter, our strong, steady and well-established tradition of policing. I mentioned the law of minimum force. There will be no change in that. There should be no change in the reluctance to carry firearms except when they are absolutely necessary. There will be no change in the basic tradition of the policeman as a citizen in uniform drawing support and strength from the community that he serves.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I apologise, but I shall not give way, as I must get on with my speech.

Certain policies flow from that. When things go wrong—every chief constable and any Home Secretary knows that they do sometimes—the mistakes must be properly investigated and the lessons learnt. The significance of the major change introduced from April this year, when the new independent Police Complaints Authority started work, is just beginning to sink in. The authority, led by Sir Cecil Clothier, the former ombudsman, supervises the processes of each investigation. That is what is new. The close involvement of a member of the Police Complaints Authority from the very start of the investigations into recent incidents of public concern, such as the tragic deaths of John Shorthouse and Mrs. Jarrett, and the

shooting of Mrs. Groce, provides a guarantee that the investigations will be full and rigorous. I understand that the papers on the Shorthouse case are now with the Director of Public Prosecutions. I hope that it will not be long before he can announce his decision.

It is to the credit of the police service that it recognises that it has everything to gain from the exposure of its procedures to scrutiny in that way. Police officers, the police service and society at large all benefit if there is public confidence in the way in which complaints are investigated.

It follows also that the police have to command respect and confidence in all parts of our communities and among every ethnic group. I welcome the strides that have been taken by the police in improving their training in community and race relations. I draw the attention of the House to the fact that tackling racial attacks is one of the priorities in the goal set for his force this year by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. Several hon. Members on both sides of the House have drawn my attention in the short time that I have held this post to the importance of that subject, and I have found that both Sir Kenneth Newman and chief constables in the Association of Chief Police Officers are responding to it. A racial attack is an attack not only on an individual but on a community. The police are rightly doing more themselves and more to enlist the help of the community to prevent and detect those crimes.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Has the Home Secretary read the report by Sir Kenneth Newman on policing principles in the Metropolis, which was produced earlier this year? Has he noted the section — and Sir Kenneth's reservations — on the membership of freemasonry by British policemen? Is he concerned in the same way as Sir Kenneth is, and, if he is, does he not think that it might be advisable to issue guidance not instructing police officers to leave freemasonry but asking them at least to consider their position?

Mr. Hurd: I remember that report. Its birth was when I was at the Home Office before. However, I have not acquainted myself with the follow-up action. If the hon. Gentleman would like to hear from me on that subject, I shall gladly write to him.

Before I conclude, I should like to mention something which is regarded as humdrum, which has not had a great deal of energy and enthusiasm put into it until recently, but which is crucial—crime prevention. The scale of crime and the rate of increase, particularly of domestic burglaries, showed to my predecessor that a fresh approach was called for. He set up inside the Home Office the Crime Prevention Unit, producing new research and evaluating new techniques. We now need a major campaign to help the public help themselves, through better police liaison schemes, earlier warning and reporting of crime, better design and standards of protective equipment as well as of possessions that most of us have, such as motor cars, which are not always designed to resist crime, and sharper focus on sites and areas at risk. If, as we are beginning to do, we can mount such a campaign, it will give the police a better chance of detecting and catching the criminal, and, in many cases, preventing the crime before it happens. In two weeks we shall have a national crime prevention conference which will provide an opportunity to carry this forward.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Do not the police believe that they are handicapped in their efforts to prevent and deter crime because the abuse of the right to challenge the membership of juries means that they are distorted in favour of too many acquittals? Is this a matter of concern? What can be done?

Mr. Hurd: That is a matter of concern. I carefully read the speech yesterday by my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel). Since then I have been in touch with the Law Officers, who have found that they do not have sufficient information for action. They believe that it would be right to gain fuller information, as my hon. Friend has said. My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General will be arranging for the new Crown prosecution service, when it is in place, to conduct such a survey so that we have a basis of fact upon which we can consider whether action is needed.

The more I learn of the work of my Department in these matters and the more I come to grips with my responsibilities, the more I realise the connection between areas of policy which, at first, seem distinct. At first, it seems to be a terrible tangle, but a pattern emerges, as older practitioners than I realised long ago. This will be the first of many debates on law and order in this Session, and I think that that is a safe prediction. Many debates will range more widely than the specific Bills to which I have referred, and I greatly welcome that.

Today I have been able to touch on only some of the important questions. We shall need the advice of the House, perhaps especially on its less partisan occasions. I think that the heart of the matter from which no one will dissent is that law and order is not just an abstract principle; it is vital to the quality of life of every person. Responsibility goes beyond Parliament, Government or the police. It is shared by all. It is a daunting task, but there is no point in just sitting back and being daunted by it. It is also a national task. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will help us to bring it to success.

3.42 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Yesterday the Prime Minister addressed the House for 31 minutes with a speech whose peroration concentrated on law and order. During the 31 minutes when the Prime Minister was standing at the Dispatch Box 207 serious criminal offences were being committed in England and Wales and another 28 were being committed in the "far north", as the right hon. Lady appears to have renamed Scotland. All that strident rhetoric and all those lavish promises might just have been acceptable in May 1979 at the time of the Government's first Queen's Speech, but this is the seventh Queen's Speech that the Prime Minister has ghost-written, and, after seven Queen's Speeches, a Government must be judged not on their promises but on their record.

This Government certainly have a record on law and order — a criminal record. This country, under this Prime Minister, is suffering from an all-time record crime wave, a mounting crime wave which even the best efforts of the police are increasingly powerless to stem. What we got yesterday from the right hon. Lady was a re-run of the final paragraphs of her speech to the Conservative party conference last month—words so hollow and artificial that they must inevitably have been written for her by Mr. Jeffrey Archer who, as the new deputy chairman of the Conservative party, has become second among unequals.

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

The Prime Minister offered an inspirational invitation to the electorate—

"Come with us, then, towards the next decade,"

she proclaimed.

"Let us together set our sights on a Britain where law-abiding men and women go their way in tranquility with their children knowing that their neighbourhood is safe."

The problem is that this promised Britain of the next decade bears no resemblance whatever to the real Britain of the past six and a half years—Thatcher's Britain.

Thatcher's Britain is a Britain in which law-abiding men and women are able less and less to go on their way with tranquility. In Thatcher's Britain every family has one chance in four of being victims of a serious crime. As for their children, Tory propagandists are no doubt already designing an election poster prominently featuring them, but graphic artists, if they are honest, should depict them as battered and bruised, as in the metropolitan police area last year 20 per cent. of mugging victims were schoolchildren.

Thatcher's Britain is not a Britain in which, as the Prime Minister puts it,

"People know that their neighbourhood is safe."

It is a Britain in which elderly men and especially elderly women are afraid to open their doors at night. It is a Britain in which a recent Home Office survey showed that 12 per cent. of inner city residents said that they never go out at night because of crime.

Thatcher's Britain is a Britain in which one crime of violence is committed every four and a half minutes; in which one act of criminal damage is committed every 61 seconds; in which one burglary is committed every 35 seconds; in which one case of theft or of handling stolen goods is committed every 17 seconds; in which one serious crime is committed every nine seconds. That is not the Prime Minister's promised land of the next decade; that is Thatcher's Britain now—today—in 1985.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme) *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: I shall give way presently, but not at the moment.

Thatcher's Britain today is one in which under this Government serious offences have risen by 40 per cent.; theft by 25 per cent.; violence against the person by 31 per cent.; arson by 40 per cent.——

Mr. Churchill *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: I undertake to give way to the hon. Gentleman presently.

Offences involving firearms are up 48 per cent.; burglaries are up 59 per cent.; criminal damage is up 63 per cent.

The Home Secretary said this afternoon that the crime wave is not confined to this country, but Thatcher's Britain is the most crime- riddencountry in Europe. What is more, far too many of the perpetrators of these crimes are getting away scot free. Not only are 1 million more serious crimes a year being committed, but also, because of the intolerable burden on the police, under this Government a decreasing proportion of those crimes is being solved. In Thatcher's Britain the number of crimes committed per police officer has risen from 24 to 29 a year.

In Thatcher's Britain the proportion of crimes cleared up has fallen from 42 per cent. to 35 per cent.; the number of thefts from 40 per cent. to 35 per cent.; the number of burglaries from 32 per cent. to 28 per cent.; the number of cases of criminal damage from 30 per cent. to 23 per cent. In Thatcher's Britain nearly three burglars in every four get clean away with their loot. In Thatcher's Britain nearly four vandals in every five evade detection and punishment.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: I give way to the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill).

Mr. Churchill: I am obliged to the right hon. Gentleman. If the Labour party is so concerned about lawlessness, why is it that up and down the country representatives of his party at every turn are seeking to undermine the police in their work, and nowhere more so than in the city of Manchester, which we both have the honour to represent?

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. Gentleman is not a Manchester Member of Parliament and should not give himself airs.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South) *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: As for the undermining of the police, I shall be coming to that very matter in considerable detail before I have finished.

The Thatcher's Britain that I have described is the real, harsh, increasingly violent, increasingly lawless Britain over which the Prime Minister presides. However, no one could have guessed it from her complacent speech yesterday or from the Home Secretary's incompetent carbon copy speech this afternoon.

We are witnessing a monumental attempt at a massive confidence trick. It began at the last general election when after four years of rising crime the Tory manifesto claimed:

"Already street crime is being reduced and public confidence improved in some of the worst inner city areas."

However, under this Government notifiable offences have increased by 62 per cent. in the police force areas which contain most of the inner cities.

The Prime Minister is trying to deceive the country, but one group that she is not deceiving—here I come to what the hon. Member for Davyhulme said—is the police. The Prime Minister makes lavish promises to them as well. At the Conservative party conference she proclaimed:

"The Government will continue steadfastly to back the police. If they need more men, more equipment, different equipment, they shall have them."

The Prime Minister said in her speech yesterday:

"The Government have made it clear that the police will have the resources that they need in the fight against crime." [*Official Report*, 6 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 25.]

But this year's public expenditure White Paper plans for a reduction in real terms in expenditure on the police. The Home Secretary rubbed those facts in at the police superintendents' conference at Torquay only six weeks ago when he admitted that increases to date in expenditure on the police

"to a large extent . . . have been swallowed up by increased demands on the police."

He confessed:

"The amount of reported crime has risen sharply, and new legislation has created new duties . . . This is not the occasion for a lecture on economic policy, but I would simply say that I see no prospect of a general loosening of the purse strings which

would enable us to transform the difficulties which you mention by fresh spending . . . there will not be further substantial increases in resources."

For months now there has been a torrent of complaints by police officers at all levels against the burdens on the police of Government policy and broken Government promises. The chief constable of Staffordshire warns:

"our manpower availability will be further depleted because of the extensive programme of training for all officers of the Force in preparation for the implementation of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act."

The chief constable of Warwickshire joins in and says:

"My biggest fear is that we will not be able to complete this very necessary training before we are obliged to commence training of the whole Force on the changes in law and procedure resulting from the Police and Criminal Evidence Act."

The chief constable of Greater Manchester adds his voice and says:

"The day of reckoning will surely come. The Government cannot possibly say they have not been warned."

In his speech this afternoon the Home Secretary said that he was delighted that chief constables found their voices from time to time. I hope that he is listening to what they say as I quote them.

Mr. Hurd: I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman would have been prepared to modify his speech after hearing what I said. I specifically dealt with the concept of need. I said that in relation to both London and the provinces the test of a successful application by the police for extra resources was simply need.

Mr. Kaufman: That is what the right hon. Gentleman said this afternoon and what he said at Torquay, but that is not what the Prime Minister said at Blackpool last month.

Mr. Hurd: That is what she said yesterday.

Mr. Kaufman: There was nothing about need in what the Prime Minister said yesterday.

Mr. Hurd: Yes there was.

Mr. Kaufman: Yesterday the Prime Minister said:

"The Government have made it clear that the police will have the resources that they need".—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1985; Vol. 86 c. 25.]

Mr. Hurd: I told the right hon. Gentleman so.

Mr. Kaufman: Good. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, then? Right. We shall come to the question of need now. I hope that the Home Secretary, who now says that the police will get what they need, is changing his policy this afternoon.

The Commissioner of the Police of the Metropolis, Sir Kenneth Newman, said:

"In seeking to operate responsibly within these limits we shall inevitably find ourselves less able to meet all of our commitments towards the general public in the way that we would wish. If we rise, for example, to a centrally counselled drive against drugs, which brings heavy demands on manpower through round-the-clock surveillance, then the existence of finite ceilings to manpower will dictate the removal of officers from other duties. The delicacy and sensitivity of the work requires the deployment of experienced officers, who are also in demand for other key areas of operational work-such as anti-robbery or anti-fraud duties."

When spelling out his requirements, the commissioner said:

"There is, I am quite certain, only one way in which these demands and the problems can be tackled and that is to have more manpower."

He said, "only one way", yet what did the Home Secretary do? The right hon. Gentleman is not giving the commissioner what he has asked for, what he needs and what makes it possible to carry out the one way of dealing with crime in London. He has given him onlym a handout to avoid cuts and an aloof lecture about giving value for money.

Mr. Hurd: I apologise for interrupting the right hon. Gentleman again. He knows that the Metropolitan police force is 300 under strength. It will take a little time to recruit up to strength, but that is taking place. At the same time, we are studying the precise application made by Sir Kenneth on the basis of need.

Mr. Kaufman: But at the Conservative party conference the Prime Minister said that if the police needed more men or more equipment, they would have them. Sir Kenneth has asked for more men. A report in *The Times* headed

"Police and Hurd in rift on recruiting"

states:

"Sir Kenneth told Mr. Hurd that he wanted an extra 3,000 officers for the 27,000 strong force because riots, with terrorism, drug offences and other crime, were taking police off the beat."

Sir Kenneth asked for an additional 3,000 men, but the right hon. Gentleman has not given him what he needs. He has given him only a few million pounds to avoid cuts. That is why the newspapers reported the matter and why the right hon. Gentleman had to make a demeaning statement denying a rift between him and Sir Kenneth.

Other people also asked for additional manpower. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will provide that. Sir Kenneth Newman's warning was repeated by chief superintendent John Keyt, the secretary of the Chief Superintendents Association, who said at his association's conference:

"There is a limit as to how far the police service can carry out the duties imposed upon them by new legislation and the changes brought about by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

The setting up of special departments to cope means that officers are being taken from the streets and they need to be replaced if contact with the public is to be maintained."

The conference was told that the police required 13,000 new men—not to cope with crime, but simply to cope with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and other legislation put forward by the Government.

I note that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) is in his place. The Police Federation has warned that the extra bureaucratic work created by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act is "a recipe for chaos."

Police constable Paul Middup, at that time the chairman of the constables section of the Police Federation, said that with other local government services, the police were forced to bear their share of spending cuts. He continued:

"Central government cannot duck the issue any longer. It is fast turning into a public scandal which is entirely of their making. They cannot blame the local authorities any longer."

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I welcome the right hon. Gentleman into my parlour. If he wants more information to assist his case that the police need more resources, I shall be delighted to provide it.

However, can the right hon. Gentleman explain why, when I put forward the figures that he is now quoting last week, he and his colleagues jeered? Why is it that when they were in office 8,000 police officers left the service because they were underpaid and under-regarded? Why is it that at the Labour party conference a number of the right hon. Gentleman's colleagues cheered when a Labour delegate described the police as the enemy?

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. Gentleman knows well that the proportion of police to crimes committed under the Labour Government was much better than the proportion now.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Answer my question.

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. Gentleman had better make up his mind whether he wishes to represent the Police Federation in this House or whether his loyalty is more to the Government in their attacks on the police — *[Interruption.]* Yes, Government attacks on the police.

"Central Government cannot duck the issue any longer. It is fast turning into a public scandal."

That was said by the Police Federation spokesman at that organisation's conference earlier this year. Today, the Home Secretary unctuously asked Her Majesty's Opposition to support the police. We support the police. The problem is that the police do not support the Home Secretary. While the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary parrot their support for the police, at its conference this year the Police Federation passed a unanimous vote of no confidence in the Government, and no doubt the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds was there to witness that.

Is there anything in the Queen's Speech that would cause the police to rescind their vote of no confidence in the Government? The proposals to penalise drug pushers and dealers will have our support, and we hope that the new Bill will have an impact on the terrible curse of drug addiction that is rotting away an ever-increasing number of victims. But before the new penalties can be imposed, the villains must be caught, and the Metropolitan Police Commissioner has pointed out strongly that if he is to do even an adequate job on drugs, the burdens caused by Government policy and financial cuts will compel him to weaken his other anti-crime teams, teams such a that contending with robbery, a crime that is often the consequence of addicts seeking to obtain money for their drugs.

If those drugs get into the country at all, one reason will be the massive weakening of the Customs service under the present Government, with 1,000 fewer Customs officials than six years ago and with some ports hardly manned. Indeed, some ports have "honour" boxes for people to declare whether they have drugs. From Cardiff to Dover, Felixstowe to Ullapool, Customs officers complain about their inability to deal with routine traffic, let alone make night boardings of ships coming from countries where drugs are grown or sold.

Yet this weakening of protection against drug smugglers comes at a time when drugs have become a greater bane than this country has ever known. Only in the past two years has drug trafficking had to be made a separate new statistic in the crime returns.

The number of registered addicts is only a fraction of the true problem, yet the total even of registered addicts has soared year by year, and those addicts are tragically young. The Home Office admits that since 1980 there has especially been an upward trend in addicts aged under 21. Three quarters of new addicts are under 30. About 70 per cent. of new addicts are males, but more and more women are becoming addicts, including women with children and pregnant women. An even greater tragedy is that not one Minister, from the Prime Minister downwards, has ever asked the crucial question: why?

Instead of helping the police to shoulder this latest urgent priority, added to all the other priorities jostling for their attention, the Government are now planning to make the task of the police even more difficult by adding a new collection of public order burdens to their already crippling workload.

The nation has, rightly, been horrified by the terrible manifestations of arson, looting, rape and murder, to which our people have been helpless and horrified witnesses in recent weeks, during the urban disturbances. Even though public order offences are no more than a tiny proportion of total crime, there is an understandable demand that stringent action should be taken to prevent riots and, where they break out, to deal with them firmly.

The Government's public order Bill will contain nothing to prevent riots and nothing that will assist the police who are allotted the dangerous task of coping with riots. On those matters the Bill will contain only two new offences which will entitle the police to make arrests during and after riots. The police are scarcely short, however, of offences under which they can make arrests in such circumstances. That is not their problem.

What is more, the new proposals restricting the right of peaceful marches and open air meetings will handicap the police. The monitoring of such events will eat even further into the limited time available to the police to cope with real crime.

The unprecedented new powers in the forthcoming Bill will force the police into making political decisions about the merits of particular marches and demonstrations, and it now turns out that they will even be required to make assessments about the peaceable intentions of the Salvation Army. Those are decisions that the police do not want to have to make, and that is why already they have compelled the Government to exclude single marches from the provisions of the Bill.

As the police are, unwillingly, being trapped in this political role — which they do not want because they know that it is completely alien to traditional and non-partisan policing in Britain—so they will be forced into unnecessary and damaging confrontations with the organisers of open air meetings who find that the Englishman's, Welshman's or Scotsman's traditional right to speak freely is being restricted by the Government's fear of free speech. Thus, the doctrinaire obsessions of the Government will distract the police from their true job of fighting crime and will further damage relations between the police and public.

"The clearance of most routine crime depends on the help supplied to the police by the public, rather than from the efforts of the police."

Those words were included in the results of a survey published by the Home Office. That finding was not surprising. The police now have so many other bureaucratic burdens that, for example, on Merseyside, they are able to spend only 6 per cent. of their time investigating crime.

By far the largest number of arrests, especially for burglary and theft, are made as the result of calls from or information supplied by the public. The Government seem determined to undermine the essential relationship between the police and the public—to erode confidence and provoke confrontation—and that will certainly be the effect of the public order Bill. Without information and co-operation from the public, the police have to fall back on methods that are less satisfactory and less successful.

We need to foster closer relationships between the police and the communities they serve. The police should be given the opportunity to become more responsive to the wishes and fears of the public. For example, on Merseyside there is a strong feeling that preventing sexual assaults on women should be one of the top priorities. The police there do not share that view. Where priorities differ, there should be more effective arrangements for the police to discuss with the public and elected representatives how best to combat crime in localities and neighbourhoods. Nothing in the Queen's Speech will help to nurture such sensible and constructive relationships, just as there is not a word about the crime wave itself or the dark places in society where crime is born and bred.

Yesterday, my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) asked the Prime Minister the simple question:

"why, during the past six years under the Conservative Government, there has been a 40 per cent. increase in reported crime?" — [*Official Report*, 6 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 20.]

The Prime Minister shiftily dodged the question, claiming that she would come to it later in her speech. She never did come to it. She never has come to it. She never will come to it because the Prime Minister is not interested in the question, still less the answer. All the Prime Minister is interested in is cheap slogans, and yet that question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington is the key question, and the question to which, in their hearts, the people know the answer.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: The answer was contained in a survey on law and order published only last week by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research. It is a survey which demonstrates that there is a clear link between the high level of recorded crime and social deprivation. It also shows that the highest recorded crime rates are found in areas suffering from the worst overcrowding and high unemployment rates. The Home Secretary pooh-poohed those facts this afternoon, but if he and the Prime Minister——

Sir Edward Gardner (Fylde) *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: —do not like what the national institute says, let the Prime Minister listen to her deputy, Lord Whitelaw, who said:

"If we can nip in the bud criminal tendencies in people then we would be going a long way towards easing the pressures on our police . . . Undoubtedly, economic mismanagement . . . where that leads to high levels of unemployment, especially amongst young people, also contributes considerably to increasing the number of those tempted into a criminal life."

Lord Whitelaw went on to prove that he had a sense of humour by adding:

"The only real remedy for this situation is a vigorous pursuit of Conservative economic and social policies."

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: However, there is not a word in the Queen's Speech about combating unemployment.

Every authoritative survey demonstrates that bringing policemen back on to the beat not only has a significant effect in reducing crime but increases public confidence, and yet the public order proposals in the Queen's Speech will take police off the beat, not put them on to it.

Evidence from the Department of the Environment shows that crime can be reduced by employing more caretaking staff and security patrols, but cuts in the rate support grant and arbitrary spending limits are forcing local councils to sack such staff and reduce such patrols

Evidence from the Department of the Environment also shows that crime can be reduced by improving estate lighting, by the installation of anti-vandal glass, by stronger front doors and frames and by closing walkways on deck flat complexes. However, after a half-hearted effort to obtain more money for housing and housing repairs, the Secretary of State for the Environment was forced in Cabinet today to settle for a derisory increase —*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman can tell us now.

Mr. Hurd: I do not know.

Mr. Kaufman: I think we know. We must take it that the Secretary of State for the Environment was forced to settle for what the BBC called this morning a significant compromise. He was forced to settle for a derisory increase in the pitiful sums that the Government allow to be spent on housing. They have reduced the housing programme to a record low and almost wiped out housing improvement grants.

Sir Edward Gardner *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: The Government's claims on law and order are a cynical sham. Even more cynical is the Prime Minister's crude determination to try to ride to an election victory on the backs of the police — men and women whose dedication to combating crime is simultaneously being exploited and undermined by the policies contained in the Queen's Speech.

When he was Shadow Home Secretary Lord Whitelaw said:

"A Government that cannot protect its own citizens from attack in the streets of its towns and cities, that cannot protect property from damage, or homes from intrusion, has failed to live up to the basic duties of Government."

Under this Prime Minister, more citizens are being attacked than ever before. Under this Prime Minister, more property is being damaged than ever before. Under this Prime Minister, more homes are suffering intrusion than ever before. The basic duties of Government, as listed by Lord Whitelaw, are being subordinated to the strident politics of confrontation. There is a growing divergence between what the police want to do and what the Government want them to do. The police want to keep order for the people. The Government want to keep the people in order.

The Government cannot conceal the facts, which is why the people of Britain will come to disdain and reject a Government who have failed to keep their promise and failed to keep the Queen's peace.

4.15 pm

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): The speech of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) was characterised, as one might expect, by a cocktail of arrogance, impudence and personal attack. He has done himself a disservice by adopting such a personal attitude towards my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. He significantly did not answer the question that I put to him about the extent to which Labour politicians up and down the country, day in and day out, have been undermining police forces and doing their best to deprive them of equipment and resources.

[Mr. Churchill]

The right hon. Gentleman did not mention Mr. Bernie Grant and his grotesque statement that the policeman who was murdered was no doubt murdered by one of his colleagues. I believe that that man is putting up for candidature of the Labour party. If the right hon. Gentleman's party is so keen on upholding a policy of law and order, how does it tolerate people such as Mr. Bernie Grant within its ranks?

How does the right hon. Gentleman have the gall to attack the Government for the resources that they have provided to police forces when he is well aware that in the city we both have the honour to represent—the right hon. Gentleman may shake his head, but I have represented a constituency in greater Manchester for 15 years—we have a police committee which is ruled by the Labour party and which is constantly seeking to attack and harry our excellent chief constable, Mr. Anderton. Only this week, it is seeking to deprive him of the 500 rounds of baton charges or plastic bullets and the weapons required to launch them which he recently acquired.

I know that it would be my constituents' view that the chief constable of greater Manchester should be able to lay his hands on all the equipment that may be required to protect them, their shops, their houses and, in the last resort, their lives from any spillover of violence in our great city. Labour politicians say that he has no right to take such prudent precautions, and I therefore venture to suggest to the right hon. Gentleman that he has been addressing his remarks in the wrong direction. It is the Labour party that should be providing, through the police committees that it controls in so many of our inner cities, the proper equipment. It is not that the resources are not there. Mr. Anderton has the resources and has purchased the equipment. Labour politicians are seeking to take it from him.

I can well see that if there were a future Labour Administration — the way in which the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues are going on makes that most unlikely—they would nationally deprive the police of the weapons and means required to maintain public order.

The Government are right in the Gracious Speech to lay such heavy stress on the twin problems of law and order and the tackling of unemployment. There could be no higher priorities on the public agenda. The Government will rightly be judged by their performance in those two subjects.

The events of recent months in Brixton, Handsworth and Tottenham have brought terror to the local community, injury to the police, and have been a stark revelation to the nation at large of the critical situation in our inner cities, which have been allowed, over the past two or three decades, to become cesspits of deprivation, lawlessness and crime.

Representing an inner city area, I have been conscious that we have enormous problems which many of our citizens living in other parts of the country do not, and possibly cannot, appreciate. I fear that what we have seen in recent weeks may be only a foretaste of flames and bloodshed which could be much greater unless very positive steps are urgently taken to deal with the problem, which potentially poses a mortal threat to our liberal democracy, for where law ends, there tyranny begins.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the troubles of recent weeks in some of our inner city areas were, at least in part, the work of extremist activists. Who taught 14 and 15-year-old school children how to make petrol bombs? Who organised the mass production of some of those petrol bombs which have burnt shops and maimed policemen?

A new and horrifying dimension was seen in Tottenham, for the first time in modern times, with the use of firearms in such disorders. Not just one but an assortment of firearms were used against the police and the fire brigade. The courage of the police and the fire brigade in continuing in those circumstances commands the admiration of the entire country.

It comes ill from the Leader of the Opposition, let alone the right hon. Member for Gorton, to lecture the Prime Minister and this Government on not doing enough to uphold the law. We see Left-wing activists up and down the country at work, day in and day out, undermining the work of the police. In London, the instinctive reaction of the Labour leader of Haringey council was to blame the police for the rioting and not those who were responsible for it.

In many cases, Labour councils in inner city areas have discouraged or even forbidden the very co-operation that the right hon. Member was suggesting should be made more widespread—the involvement of the police in the schools and with youth clubs. Labour councils have forbidden it, yet neither the Leader of the Labour party nor his sidekick from Gorton has the courage to stand up to the petty tyrants in the town halls who seek to dictate to the police while the right hon. Gentlemen seek to accuse the Prime Minister of not doing enough to support the police.

The Government propose to introduce a new public order Bill. That is necessary and even overdue, but in itself it is not enough. How right was my right hon. Friend, in opening the debate yesterday on the Loyal Address, when she said:

> "The solution must ultimately lie in a strengthening of our traditional sources of discipline and authority—the family, the church, the school, responsible community and civic leadership and support for the police."—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 25.]

It is urgent that parents should be made more responsible for the actions of their children. Is it not time that they were made more financially accountable for the criminal acts of their children who are minors? Could there be any more effective way of requiring parents to supervise their children properly, and to ask where little Johnny is tonight, than the knowledge that they could see their colour television being taken out of the front door to pay compensation to the victims of their children's actions?

In considering the problems of the inner cities in a broader spectrum, it is difficult to deny that one of the most disturbing facts is the extent to which those coming on to the job market today are all too often without any skills to offer in a modern technological society such as we have today.

The problem goes far wider than the responsibility of the Home Department. The Secretary of State for Education and Science is seeking urgently to raise the standards of teaching, but there must be a special emphasis on the inner city areas. Hundreds of millions of pounds have already been channeled into the inner city areas, but

if we fail to build a cohesive society in the years ahead, and fail to improve the standards of education of those living in the most deprived areas, we shall rue it.

In the course of many visits, nothing has struck me more forcibly than the extent to which the standards of the blacks in American society have been raised over the past five to 10 years. They have been raised economically and educationally to a high degree. Blacks are forming their own businesses and playing prominent parts in local and national politics. They are playing prominent roles in industry and commerce. We must also try to achieve that goal. It should be the task of Government to make available the opportunities necessary to provide such a future for the young people in the most deprived areas.

4.30 pm

Mr. James Callaghan (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I shall make a short speech because I know that many hon. Members wish to participate in it.

The hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) told us that what we have witnessed is a foretaste of what is to come. He called for a substantial increase in the resources devoted to our inner cities and a raising of the standards of those who live in them, many of whom are coloured, being black or brown. He was right to do so. That was one of the passages in his speech with which I agreed.

I have represented for a few years one of the oldest coloured communities in Britain. It is a long-settled community of people who were called Lascars. They came 70 years ago to settle in Cardiff to help us with our merchant navy in the first world war. There were riots in Cardiff in the early 1920s and since then the community has grown. We have seen the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren of those who came to Cardiff 70 years ago. Originally, they were concentrated in Bute town—the nucleus of the community remains there—but they are now spread out much more widely throughout Cardiff.

Those who live in my constituency, especially in Bute town and similar areas, expect the same standard of quietness and tranquillity and the ability to lead their own lives as any wealthy white community or surburb. My constituents demand the same services from the police and the same behaviour from those who live in their midst as any other community. Relatively new areas have grown up in Cardiff in recent years and some of those who live in them are black, but we must never try to tar the majority of the black or coloured people who live in those areas with the activities of the minority who are to be seen on our television screens as rioters. The majority want to live quietly among us in our multiracial society. We shall misunderstand the problem if we do not accept that proposition. We must understand that the blacks or the coloureds expect the same standards as anyone else. They demand to be free from hooliganism like anyone else.

There is no doubt about the seriousness of the increase in crime, especially the crimes of violence, robbery and hooliganism which we have witnessed recently. My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) wanted to know why the Prime Minister did not reply when he was asked why this has happened. She did not reply because she does not know the answer, and I am bound to say that I am not sure whether I do. One of the problems that the House must face is that there are no clear answers to the problem.

I could make a good case for saying how much better things were when I was Home Secretary than they are now with the right hon. Member for Whitney (Mr. Hurd) as Home Secretary. The Prime Minister said yesterday that the traditions of the church, the family and the schools have all weakened and that they must be strengthened. It is true that there has been a general decline in morality in the community — and we should not exempt what happens in the City of London when we make that general accusation. There is a general standard of morality that we must all observe. That is one of the things which we must bear in mind when we introduce legislation and in the way in which we conduct our affairs and talk to one another.

There is no doubt that the police are over-strained. It is over 20 years since I had close contact with them, but I know from my experience that they want more help than they are getting. Of course the Home Secretary cannot give them all that they want. If the Prime Minister said that they could have everything they wanted, she was making a great mistake. The police will not get everything and the Home Secretary was right if he tried to put the correct gloss on that issue. However, the police need more assistance than they are getting now and I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will find it possible to give them that.

The handful of authorities that are denying the police access to schools are behaving in a short-sighted and foolish way. These authorities should permit the police to enter schools so that children may see them, understand the job that they are trying to do and understand their problems. The Labour authorities that are denying entry to the police—I do not know whether any Conservative authorities are doing so—should reverse their decision forthwith.

It is clear that Mr. Grant still has much to learn. Over the past few weeks he has received a roasting from my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and from every leader writer, and I am sure that that has taught him a great deal. There is nothing like a good roasting for teaching us when we have gone wrong. If Mr. Grant is a man of intelligence, he will have learnt a great deal from his recent experience.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition was correct when he painted the scene, in a speech which held the House. I do not expect to be a member of my right hon. Friend's Administration, but I am pleased to say that he is growing in stature with every speech he makes, and he made a splendid speech yesterday.

We must recognise that the police need help from us all, including everyone in this place. That brings me to the Home Secretary and the attitude of my party and that of the Government. I welcomed the Home Secretary's tone this afternoon. He gave way continually to interventions and it could be said that he did so a little too often and allowed the interventions to interfere with the thread of his speech. One of my more cynical colleagues suggested that he did not have much of a speech to make, but I prefer to give the right hon. Gentleman the benefit of the doubt.

The right hon. Gentleman adopted a good approach, but what will be the approach of Conservative Back Benchers? It appears from what I have read in the newspapers that they think that they have a trump card. They seem to think that if they can pretend that the Labour party is against law and order and the police, they will win the next general election for the Conservative party. That is what some Conservative Members are saying. They had better make up their minds on how seriously they regard the problem.

[Mr. James Callaghan]

If the hon. Member for Davyhulme is correct to say that what we have seen is only a foretaste of what is to come unless tremendous changes are made, Conservative Back Benchers must ask themselves how responsible they will be in trying to pretend that one of the major parties is opposed to law and order as a means of establishing an electoral advantage. To what extent would they be subscribing to the national interest in taking that course?

Equally, the Labour party must not allow itself to appear constantly to be criticising the police and not supporting them. The police need the support of us all and they must have it. Our people will suffer as much as Conservative Members' constituents if law and order breaks down. A new approach is needed and the Home Secretary has provided an opportunity today for one to be taken. However, if he asks for our support, he must restrain the Prime Minister and Conservative Back Benchers when they try to pretend that the great mass of the Labour party and those who support and represent it are not as interested in preserving the things that we value as the Government are.

The initiative lies to a great extent with the Home Secretary, but we, the Opposition, must make a response when the time comes. It is in everyone's interest that the scenes which we have seen on our television screens in recent weeks and months should not be repeated. It is clear that that will be in the country's interests as well. Let us try to take the issue out of party politics as far as possible. The preservation of law and order with proper social conditions must be our objective. We shall all suffer if our efforts to achieve it are not sustained.

4.39 pm

Mr. Julian Critchley (Aldershot): I hope that the House will forgive me if I do not take up directly the wise words of the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan). I do not wish to concentrate, in what will be a short speech, upon the problems of law and order. I want to look beyond the Gracious Speech to some shifts in attitudes and policies within the Conservative Government which are to be welcomed, small though they might be.

The two events of the summer recess were clearly the Conservative party conference and the Government reshuffle. I went to the first but I played no part in the second. That might be because I do not measure up to the Prime Minister's criterion for promotion, which is that new Ministers must be "real good marketing men."

The theme of our party conference was that our policies were right but that our public relations were wrong. Surely that is not the case. Have we not enjoyed in the past all the marketing skills for which we are now looking? Has there really been a failure, in Conservative party terms, of public relations? Surely there has not. The truth has been told as Her Majesty's Government have wanted it, certainly in the past six years. Thatcherism, so called, has altered the face of our politics, which is proof of my assertion.

It might also be asserted that the Government have enjoyed a more favourable national press than any other Government for many years. The influence of Rupert Murdoch at the smart and low ends of Fleet street is proof of that. Where the Government have not been so fortunate is in the attitudes adopted by the BBC and ITV. That may be one of the reasons for the Government's attempt to bully the BBC over the "Real Lives" programme.

Over the past few years, the Government have not lacked rainmakers and magicians. Members of the Conservative party owe it to our magicians and rainmakers to be fair. We must have a good word to say for Gordon Reece, a man who gave us not just one new Mrs. Thatcher but two. We must have a good word for the Saatchi brothers, who made us an offer we could not refuse. And we should not forget Lord Everett of Wembley. Are these magicians, following our party conference at Blackpool, to become non-persons, saddled with the blame for our failures? How cruel a fate.

What message should we send to our new rainmakers —Harvey Thomas and Jeffrey Archer, both of whom are kept under close security in Conservative central office? It must be "Shine on, Harvey Moon." Let us do the decent thing by our rainmakers. Since 1975, with a little help from the Prime Minister, they have changed the political agenda, and I can give a brief list of simple truths. This is the old agenda on which we fought two general elections. First, public spending is bad; second, civil servants idle; third, waste is rife; fourth, everyone must suffer; fifth, moaning minnies must get on their bikes; sixth, state benefits are far too high; seventh, there is no alternative to the economic policies; and eighth, we must all pull up our socks. No wonder we are unloved.

Our new rainmakers have concocted a new agenda, of which I shall also read out the items. First, public spending is good — all those hospitals; second, we have not suffered; third, the Government care; fourth, the Government will cut income tax—Nigel says so; fifth, we shall even cut unemployment — Nigel says so as well; sixth, the Government will give us new laws and, it is hoped, more order; seventh, Mrs. T. loves you after all; eighth, the Government will do away with rates, but not yet; and, ninth, the Government can perform the five-card trick.

We oversold the first agenda, but let us take great care not to undersell the new agenda. The new agenda is more liveable with than the old. In the past, the Prime Minister and the Government seemed to work on the basis of the old Spanish proverb — the greater the number of enemies, the greater the honour. Let us now start to make friends with the electorate.

4.44 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I shall return to the subject of Home Office matters, which are the theme of today's debate. There is widespread anxiety in Britain today that the spread of violence, disorder and hooliganism speaks of a growing lawlessness and constitutes a menacing threat to law-abiding citizens and to the harmony of our communities. The sinister spread of drug-related offences has deepened public fear.

Therefore, it is not surprising that, in the year of Handsworth, Brixton and Tottenham, the Prime Minister should have thought to focus the debate on the Government's response to these threats to the tranquillity of the realm. Crime and public disorder are deeply serious problems, especially for those living in the deprived areas of our cities. The Prime Minister has ensured by her attitude to these problems that the effectiveness of the Government's response to this challenge is, and will continue to be, under the searchlight of public scrutiny.

I welcome the tone of the Home Secretary's speech, which sharply contrasts with that of the Prime Minister and with the partisan speech of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), the official spokesman for the Labour party. Those two speeches also sharply contrast with the speech of a previous Home Secretary and Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) whose words should carry weight and carry it beyond the Chamber.

What is happening with crime and public disorder is not that we are experiencing new crimes but that the scale and increasing frequency of criminal behaviour is growing. Criminal behaviour, drug offences and mob violence have for some time challenged the assumption that this country is a uniquely happy one, wedded to the motto of live and let live.

There was a note of surprising complacency about the situation in the last Conservative manifesto in 1983, which made the surprising assertion:

"already street crime is being reduced and public confidence improved in some of the worst inner city areas".

How hollow these words sound today. If such public confidence existed then, it has certainly evaporated now.

That pre-electoral optimism is out of tune not only with public opinion but with the hard fact of criminal statistics. Since 1979, there has been an increase in the number of notifiable offences from 2·3 million to 3·3 million. Offences involving violence against the person were up to 140,000 last year, a slight downturn in the rate but one offset by the 10 to 13 per cent. increase in the rate of notified crimes against property.

The Queen's Speech proposes measures to confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking in drugs and to penalise the handling of such proceeds. These measures are plainly necessary and in principle enjoy the support of the alliance parties. However, the vile crimes perpetrated by drug pushers against some of our more vulnerable young people require measures on many fronts—international action, vigilant policing, additional medical provisions and care for addicts. The war on drugs requires a commitment of resources on a scale not hitherto contemplated by the Government. I acknowledge what has been done but it is not sufficient to tackle the corrosive effect of drugs, particularly in our inner cities.

Similarly, offences against public order did not begin with the arrival of this Conservative Government, although their incidence has greatly increased. It is more than six years since the then Home Secretary, Lord Whitelaw, announced the review of the Public Order Act 1936 and related legislation. After long gestation and considerably more experience of public disorder in this country, we have the proposals referred to yesterday in the Gracious Speech.

In the six years that have passed since the Government took office they have repeatedly proclaimed their commitment to tackle the inexorable rise in crime. Their approach was foreshadowed in their 1979 manifesto, in which they spoke of giving what they called "the right priority" to the fight against crime. But year by year the problem grows. Year by year the Government announce a new initiative, which is presented to the sound of trumpets as not merely of value in itself but as evidence of the Government's peculiar commitment to tackling the problem.

It is damaging when political parties claim particular competence or a unique determination to deal with crime. The public expects its politicians to be united in this objective, and statistical evidence of past performance should induce a little more modesty in political leaders. None the less, the present Government, and particularly the Prime Minister, have made extravagant claims. They cannot be surprised if at the end of the day they are judged by the results of their attack on crime and not by their rhetoric. Every time that a policy has been advanced to tackle crime it has been with a flourish. Too much weight has been placed upon the importance of all these initiatives. Individually or cumulatively they may have been necessary and even desirable but, alas, it is only too clear how far they fall short of a solution.

The first step the Government took was to announce an increase in manpower for the police forces. That initiative, though welcome, appears largely to have run its course. Sir Kenneth Newman, despite the Prime Minister's promises, appears not to be furnished with the resources he has sought. The difference between the right hon. Member for Gorton and the Home Secretary can easily be reconciled. The question is, who perceives and judges what is to be the need for the establishments? I welcome the decision to increase the establishment in the Metropolitan area, but there has not been a proper review of it for 60 years.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): Does the hon. Gentleman applaud or decry the fact that during the last five and a half years the strength of the police force has risen by about 12,000?

Mr. Maclennan: Naturally I applaud it. I believe that it may be necessary, particularly in the metropolitan area, to go considerably further than the Government plan to go. The second initiative that the Government announced to tackle crime was contained in the Criminal Justice Act 1982. It was designed to increase the penalties for offences, particularly those committed by young offenders. Would that those changed sentencing procedures had wrought a reduction in juvenile crime. Extravagant claims were made which will not be realised.

The third step was to alter the rules for obtaining evidence to assist the police to secure convictions. It is too early to say what may be the result of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 on crime rates, but I hope that it is not thought to be soft on crime to express some doubt as to whether it will amount to as much as it has been cracked up to be.

The Gracious Speech indicates a fourth approach, the creation of new criminal offences. Much of what is proposed seems to me to be uncontroversial and welcome, particularly where it follows the recommendations of the Law Commission to modernise and codify the law of riot and affray. I believe that it would also be right to amend section 5 of the Public Order Act 1936 to make it an offence for any person in a public or private place to use threatening or abusive words or behaviour that is intended or likely to cause another to fear unlawful violence or to provoke the use of unlawful violence by another. This new law would apply to demonstrators, pickets, football hooligans or anyone else who crossed the line between peaceful assembly and infringement of the rights of others.

The Government's proposals to extend section 3 of the Public Order Act 1936 to cover static assemblies are, however, more controversial. A society that is committed to the rule of law must recognise that that law protects the

[Mr. Maclennan]

rights of freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association with others, which rights are guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights.

The police have traditionally found little difficulty in controlling public meetings by the use of the ordinary criminal law. For the individual, there is always the civil law to protect his or her person or property against unlawful assemblies, though the Government did little to protect the rule of law when they sought to inhibit the use of the civil law against picketing miners during the miners' strike. Although the police did their duty uncomplainingly, I believe that they would have preferred not to have to carry on their shoulders the full weight of protecting the working miners. Once again I fear that the Government may be guilty of overselling their public order proposals.

It was the legal correspondent of the *Financial Times* who wrote recently:

"The Home Secretary, in framing his proposals for reforming the present public order law, assumes too blandly that a tightening of police powers over demonstrations and meetings will reduce, if not eliminate, some of the public disorders which have disrupted public life in recent years, even supposing such powers did not infringe our civil liberties."

The two alliance parties will support the legislation that is necessary and that is designed to combat public disorder in a constructive manner. They will review closely the provisions of the Bill when it is published. No business of Government is more important than the protection of individuals going about their lawful business from violence, intimidation and harassment.

The public is deeply concerned that public order should be upheld, but it will find it difficult to admire the image of the Prime Minister that is drawn by some of her acolytes in this morning's press. The contrast between the tone of the Prime Minister yesterday and the reportage of her performance and the cool, almost dispassionate detachment of the Home Secretary will not have been lost on any right hon. or hon. Member. The Home Secretary could afford to be dispassionate. The dirty work had already been done. One egregious commentator stated:

"The Prime Minister turned chief crime-buster last night."

What has he been doing for the last six years? Why is he so unappreciative of her earlier efforts at crime-busting?

The Prime Minister's vainglorious image will not dazzle a rightly sceptical public. The fight against crime will be long and hard and will not end with a spectacular victory. It will require the support of every right hon. and hon. Member.

4.58 pm

Mr. William Shelton (Streatham): The 1981 Brixton riots took place before the 1983 redistribution of seats. They were therefore outside my Streatham constituency. Since the 1983 redistribution, part of Brixton — a rectangle running from Lambeth town hall—falls within my constituency. Immediately after redistribution, I became very much involved with the community police consultative group and, as much as possible, with the community in Brixton.

What happened at the end of September came almost as a personal shock and tragedy to me. One of my more ill-timed letters was written to the local press only two weeks before those events. In it, I supported and praised the community police consultative group and said that I thought that there was little likelihood of the kind of troubles that we experienced in 1981 ever occurring again. The disorder came therefore as a great shock to many people, including myself.

Like many other people, I have asked why the trouble happened or why we think that it happened, but, as with any major event, there are many different strands. Everyone suggests different causes and no one knows the real ones. One cause was the very unfortunate death of Mrs. Groce. Obviously that was received with much understandable indignation. Another element is the youngsters who are in it for the looting. Perhaps the Opposition would say that a shortage of Government funds has led to inner-city deprivation, a poor environment and much unemployment.

Also, many ill-intentioned people were hanging about. On the previous weekend, the police advised market traders to pack up and go home early because they foresaw trouble. On the Friday before the weekend of the riots *The Star*—one of the local free sheets thrust through our doors —carried a front page interview with Councillor Ted Knight, the leader of Lambeth council, in which he said that he foresaw trouble shortly. I do not know whether he had some prophetic sight or whether he knew that it was coming. Nevertheless, there were signs that ill-intentioned people were looking for trouble.

I make the point constantly that in Lambeth there has been no shortage of cash. I will not weary the House by quoting the amounts of money allocated during the past few years. People either forget or prefer to ignore that the rate support grant provides 50 per cent. of Lambeth's £120 million or so spending. In addition to the rate support grant, Lambeth gets some £70 million, made up from the housing revenue account, the housing improvement programme allocation, the urban programme and the inner-city grant. What the council does with the additional money is quite another matter, to which I shall come later.

Many people ascribe what happened at the end of September to anti-police feeling. Certainly there was anti-police feeling when Mrs. Groce was, I trust accidentally, shot. As the right hon. Member Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) said, the people who rioted are a small minority. One can understand some anti-police feeling. There is an ethnic community in Brixton some of whom use drugs in the same way that we use tea or coffee. The police fulfil their duty and arrest them and they feel aggrieved at being arrested for smoking marijuana, for instance.

I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth is not here, because I must disagree with him. Perhaps some Opposition Members agree with me that among the Left wing of the Labour party or perhaps outside the Labour party there are those with ill intentions towards the police. I heard on the radio the other day that teachers — presumably the Inner London Teachers Association — have endorsed the proposal that no London schools should open their doors to the police because of police "institutional racism". I do not know whether that is true, but many London schools do not allow the police to talk to the youngsters in class. I believe that that is awfully wrong.

The police are kept out, but that video made by the Greater London council is let in. Some hon. Members have seen the video, which is an absolute travesty of the facts. If the teachers allow youngesters to see the video they should at least allow the police to come in—which

I should much prefer. Pray heaven that in May the Conservatives will capture the Inner London education authority and do something about that.

I hope that I shall be forgiven if I continue to refer to the comments of the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, but he made a very good speech except for a few references to the Leader of the Opposition with which I did not entirely agree. He said that we must all support the police. Surely that includes the teachers who have the care of our young.

As my constituency and Brixton fall within Lambeth, I must refer to Lambeth council and its attitude towards the police. I can guess that councillors have this attitude because they want local control of the police. Some Lambeth councillors may believe that the more that they can undermine the police, the sooner they will gain the local control that they so badly want. The vast majority of my constituents would be deeply alarmed if they saw that coming.

I want to discuss some small straws in the wind—nothing fundamental. For years, Lambeth allowed the police into the social services directorate to discuss cases of people in need of help or care and children who might be battered. A short while ago the police were barred from the social services directorate. Lambeth council, like other Left-wing Labour councils, has set up its own police committee in direct competition with the community police consultative group created as a result of the Scarman recommendations following the 1981 riots. The Lambeth council committee was set up at considerable cost to the ratepayers and is run by a local councillor. The police are not allowed to attend the meetings.

The committee members decide what they consider the police should do and they write to the police or hold undercover meetings with the police because they believe that it would be compromising to be seen talking openly. Whatever the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) may say, that attitude does not give the community confidence that they are in close liaison with the police.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) has just left the Opposition Front Bench. The community police consultative group automatically comprises all elected members from Lambeth — Members of Parliament, GLC members and councillors. The hon. Member for Vauxhall was a member for a short while, but he resigned. I have no idea whether he resigned under pressure from the caucus in his constituency or of his own free will. I have not had an opportunity to ask him.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the hon. Member tell the House whether that body had any power? Such a body was established in Merseyside, and having seen it function it seems to me that my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) probably resigned because its recommendations or suggestions were not implemented. The body had no power to ensure that its recommendations were carried out. There is no point in going to meetings if no good comes of them.

Mr. Shelton: It is true that such a consultative group does not have any power; I take the hon. Member's point. However, the police commander Alex Marnoch—who is, unfortunately, moving on and will no doubt be replaced by another equally good commander—and three or four of his colleagues always attend when the group meets every two weeks or once a month. Although the group has no power to make the police commander do anything, I assure the House that it is very awkward—the hon. Member knows how these things work—for the police representative to say, "No, we will not do it." That committee has much power of persuasion but it has no constitutional power. Had I realised that the hon. Member for Vauxhall would not be present I would have sent him a note saying that I intended to refer to him.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I do not think that my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) has been present at all for this part of the debate.

The hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) should remember, when he refers in a rather derogatory fashion to some of the committees set up by the council, that in many areas—I cannot speak for all areas—there are Conservative members on those committees. There are Conservative members on the committee in Tottenham, for example. Is the hon. Member for Streatham condemning them as well?

Will the hon. Member for Streatham also consider the much wider issue of the problems in some inner-city areas? As my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) said, the relationship between the police and the public has become very bad. The hon. Member for Streatham should not just list all the baddies on one side and forget the other side as though he is one of the goodies. The hon. Gentleman must recognise that this is a two-way relationship and that good and bad exist on both sides. We must realise that before we can improve the situation.

Mr. Shelton: I do not know whether a Scarman community police consultative group exists in Tottenham. If such a group does not exist, it is right and proper that one sponsored by the council should exist. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) has missed my point. The police consultative groups were set up after 1981 on Lord Scarman's recommendations. The consultative group in Lambeth has done excellent work. It takes time to operate, but it has transformed the community. That is why I wrote that rather ill-judged letter to the local paper commending the group's good work and saying I could not foresee any problems. The riot in September might not have occurred in two years' time if the excellent work done by the consultative group in Lambeth had taken effect.

I am carping about the fact that a year ago Lambeth council set up a rival group. When I attended a meeting of the Scarman community consultative group last Tuesday we were told — to indrawn gasps of astonishment, horror and amazement — that Lambeth council had just advised us that it could no longer make available the office that it had provided for the last three years. The reason given by the council was that it is overcrowded and needs the office space for extra staff. That sits ill with the council's statements that because of rate capping it will have to fire between 1,500 and 2,000 staff.

As the Minister of State knows, the consultative group is an excellent one. It is funded through the Home Office and urgently needs £5,000 to £10,000 to install itself in new offices. I shall shortly be writing to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my hon. Friend the Minister of State about this matter.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to comment. He is correct in saying that the Lambeth consultative committee has been threatened with dispossession of its premises. I have met members of the Lambeth consultative committee and have assured them of our continuing support. I hope that, through the commissioner who has the authority for assisting these groups, we shall be able to help them in their present emergency. I remind my hon. Friend that the consultative committees are set up under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and I hope they will be set up throughout the metropolis in due course.

Mr. Shelton: I welcome the remarks of my hon. Friend, and I shall send copies of the appropriate columns of *Hansard* to all the members of the Lambeth consultative group.

I will not delay the House much longer, but I wish to make a small digression on the plight of small traders in Brixton, many of whom are Asian and have suffered as a consequence of these riots. Theirs is a peculiar and specific problem on which I do not feel capable of advising. They cannot get insurance for their properties. Brixton has become a no-go area for insurance. One small shopkeeper, whose insurance lapsed when he was paying £1,000 a year, is now being asked for £9,000 a year. I say, "Surely this is only because of the riot and the danger of being burnt down?" but he would reply, "No." His broker told him, for instance, that no one would be given comprehensive car cover insurance in Brixton. They would receive only third party insurance. Bridging loans are not available for small shopkeepers in Brixton. As an example of the present state of Brixton, a bus conductor in Brixton told me recently that people were still asking whether it was safe to get off at bus stops in Brixton.

Unless we find answers to these problems — not specifically of insurance, but of reassurance about Brixton — Brixton will decay and become a ghost town with increasing unemployment and prospects of trouble. What is the way forward? I do not pretend to know the answer to the question, but two things need to be done. First, we should support the community police consultative group which transformed the ethos in Brixton over two years ago until the end of September last. The goodies in Brixton became self-confident and stood up against the small minority of bullies and villains.

The main consultative community group consists of approximately 40 smaller community groups and the commander representing the police is always present. If we want good community and police relations in Brixton or anywhere else where such relations are required, a forum must exist. I cannot accept the Lambeth council police committee as a forum because it excludes the police. I urge everyone in Brixton and on Lambeth council strongly to support the community committee.

Environment has been given as a reason for some of the problems. There are estates in Brixton which are appallingly administered. Some of the property is in an awful condition. Repairs and transfers take not weeks or months but years. To some extent I blame the ideological rubbish propounded by Lambeth council which refuses to sell council houses until forced in desperation by the law. I am not sure whether this is deliberate, but the council also houses homeless families in blocks inhabited by elderly people, thus breaking up those blocks. It blames what happens on the Government and on shortage of funds, but it has had £70 million in addition to the rate support grant this year. Lambeth council does not collect its rents and gives no hope or rights to its tenants. The council does not answer letters. I have difficulty in obtaining answers to my letters, but I do not suppose that that is deliberate. The councillors—not the officers—do not trust the people and prefer to keep them as dependent vote fodder.

I believe that if the Conservatives do not win the council elections in May, the only solution to the problems in inner cities will be to take the control of housing away from the elected councils and keep it politically neutral. A system of housing corporations should be instituted to run the large, awful estates in Brixton. I can see no other solution. I cannot envisage Labour-controlled Lambeth running them. If and when the Conservatives take control in May they will need eight years rather than four to put things right, and they may well not have eight years. Perhaps, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy once suggested, we should give council houses away, but at least we must take them away from political control and give them to a housing association.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would like to reflect on the fact that one of the problems with housing is that people feel that they have no control. To change from one form of authority to another is not the solution. Would he consider handing control to the people by devolving management and control to them rather than by replacing one landlord with another and leaving the people powerless over their own destiny?

Mr. Shelton: The hon. Member is prescient. He has obviously read my notes. I agree with him, but I do not think that Labour-controlled Lambeth will ever do that. That is why I should like control to be given to the housing association. The housing association should set up management co-operatives for people who cannot afford to buy houses, privatise run-down blocks, which were mentioned in the Gracious Speech, undertake homesteading, a good plan which the GLC used to do and which I have pressed on Lambeth unavailingly, ensure efficient transfers and repairs and promote the sales of houses and flats. In other words, it should do all the things that a good, non-profit making caring landlord should do to work itself out of business as, I understand, the Commission for New Towns is doing, trying to privatise the new towns. I am not entirely pessimistic. There is a way forward for Lambeth, but there is not much time. We must act quickly.

5.21 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I am surprised how often Conservative Members attack democratically elected local government and suggest that services should be taken away from them, especially if those councils are not controlled by the Conservative party. The answer seems to be to take away control of housing if they do not win the local government elections. That seems a strange way forward. The hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) and others criticise a democratically elected local authority for setting up police monitoring committees, or committees to deal with police liaison. That is the height of hypocrisy. It implies that the policing of areas has nothing to do with the elected representatives of the people. I remind hon. Members that there would be no

police forces if they had not been pioneered by local government. When Conservative Members glibly attack the idea of politics in policing, they are really saying that they do not want police policy to be accountable to democratically elected institutions, whether it be this Chamber or democratically elected local councils.

The Labour party argues, quite reasonably, that local councils—democratically elected watch committees as they used to be called—should not have the right or the power to interfere in the day-to-day affairs of the police but should have some say in terms of policy direction and the deployment of resources.

I have strong feelings about this because, in Bootle, there is a new game called spot the policeman. They are falling over them in Toxteth, we are told, where there is intensive policing, to which the community objects. However, in my constituency people come to my advice bureau, and ask me when I meet them in the street, "Why cannot we have the bobby back on the beat? Why cannot we have more policemen, not fewer? Why do they drive through our estates in panda cars but fail to stop when we flag them down? Why do the policemen in this area not understand and know the area but come from the Wirral and elsewhere?"

I remember Mrs. Margaret Simey saying that we take 22-year-old young men from the Wirral, give them hardly any training, put them into uniform and send them into Toxteth. Without any training, they are asking Pakistanis for their Christian names and things like that. We should be done for cruelty to children in view of the way we treat some of the young people who join the police force.

These are the issues that the Labour party is arguing for —training, deployment of resources and political input into the community. There is nothing sinister about it. We are concerned with the traditions of democratic accountability and of local government.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): If the Labour party's plans to control the police came about in Tottenham, for example, would the hon. Gentleman be quite happy for Mr. Bernie Grant to have operational and political control over the police in that area?

Mr. Roberts: I would be happy for Mr. Bernie Grant or any other local politician to have operational control over the police. It would not harm the relationship between the community and the police if Bernie Grant was one of the elected representatives on an all-party committee that discussed the policing of the community of which he is a representative. One would expect that, on some of the police authorities or watch committees, there would be people of extreme views such as the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill). I would suffer for the sake of democracy such people sitting on watch committees if they had been directly elected. Such representation and control would improve the important relationship between the police and the communities that they police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Will the hon. Gentleman tell us what he has in mind that the committees will do? Are they to be debating chambers or will they have an executive role to play? If so, what?

Mr. Roberts: It is not difficult to describe their terms of reference. They would do exactly what the watch committees used to do. In the city of Manchester we used to have a watch committee to which the police were accountable. It bought police horses and interesting things like that. It had a trip to Ireland and bought three horses. One died on the way home and one was found to be blind. The other was all right until two months later, when the police band struck up in Albert square and the horse stood up on its hind legs because it was a circus horse.

Those are the kind of decisions that the old watch committees used to take. However, there was some accountability because, having made those mistakes, the then Tory council lost the election the following May. They were the kind of policing decisions that involve the community. People felt that they could go along to a councillor's advice bureau and ask, "Where's the policeman? The lights are out in our area." They would deal with the problem at once. There was some contact between the community and the police. There was nothing sinister about it.

When the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) was Home Secretary, he started the process, under a Labour Government, of amalgamating police forces and making them larger. Even then the joint Salford and Manchester police force had a committee of elected councillors with some responsibility for policing policy, not day-to-day administration or interference. There was nothing sinister or difficult about it.

Mr. Soley: What my hon. Friend has said about elected people is right. We accept that people are elected, whether they come from the Right or the Left. That is an important point of principle. I wish to return to the point that my hon. Friend left without explaining concerning training. In London, 80 per cent. of the police force come from outside the city and, as in Merseyside, they have only 20 weeks' training. Firearms training takes about 10 days and then one day every quarter as follow-up training. It is totally unfair on the police to ask them to police these areas with such inadequate training.

Mr. Roberts: I shall say more about police training when I talk about the drug problem, especially in relation to my constituency. I believe I am supporting the police when I say that the interface between them and the community through their elected representatives is a good thing.

The Conservative party, the so-called party of law and order, has made one of its bigger mistakes by believing its own electioneering propaganda. I believe that that is why crime has escalated dramatically in the past six years. The Conservatives believe that one needs only to make a loud noise about how evil criminals are and suggest that there should be severe punishment, even capital punishment or flogging, and the introduction of the short, sharp shock to solve the problem. They believe that the answer is more punishment and stricter penalties. That is their mistake because certainty of detection is a greater deterrent than severity of punishment. It does not matter what the punishment is: if the criminal thinks he will not get caught, he will take the risk.

The Conservative party misunderstands the need for expenditure on rehabilitation. People who are put in prison, unless they are to be kept there for ever, have to come out. If money is not spent on rehabilitation, they will reoffend. That point has been missed by the so-called party of law and order. The Conservatives say that to maintain law and order in our society people must be allowed to have a stake in the country. A further deterrent, as well as

[Mr. Roberts]

certainty of detection, is the loss of self-respect, the possible loss of a job and the loss of dignity from having committed a crime and being found out. If people have no job, no stake in the country and no self-respect and they leave school with no hope of finding a job and queue up in an undignified way at the Department of Health and Social Security, there is no deterrent because they have nothing to lose. That is the society that is being created as a result of massive youth unemployment and no hope for the future. My community has to suffer cuts in services and live without youth clubs.

It is no good blaming Labour local authorities or saying that it is all the fault of the militants in Lambeth. The figures for unemployment, crime and drug pushing are higher in my constituency than anywhere in the country. I have to carry the burden not only of a Conservative Government, but of a Conservative council. If Derek Hatton is driving all the investors from Liverpool, I do not know who is driving them from Sefton, because the leader of the Conservative council in Sefton has been there for 10 years and the crime wave and unemployment are still soaring. One cannot make local government the scapegoat. One has to look at the real causes of the problem.

An organisation on Merseyside called the Merseyside drugs education training unit has been doing research into the drug problem on Merseyside. It is funded by Merseyside county council. It does not know where its funding will come from at the end of the year, but I hope that it comes from somewhere and that the Government assist. The researcher from that organisation said of Bootle:

"From my research, and informal conversations in the field, Bootle appears to be one of the main centres for the distribution of heroin on Merseyside, with users from Birkenhead, Southport and other outlying areas travelling to one estate to score. As I outlined in the introduction to this report, everyone that was interviewed agreed that the use and availability of heroin had escalated in the past two years."

The person being interviewed said:

"'This dealer we used to buy off, he used to supply Bootle, Formby, Waterloo and Litherland, that's how many junkies there were. There was, at the very most, 25 junkies when we started 3½ years ago'"

He was asked how many he thought there were now.

"'25 million. I've never, ever, gone down to Bootle and come away empty handed. Smack. It's all smack. Like on that Bootle estate'"—

he is referring to the Church street estate—

"'there's about ten dealers. If one hasn't got it, next door will have it. It's odd, this is just over a year ago and I wasn't aware there was smack everywhere, easy to be had. It's so easy, if you know the general area, you've just got to walk around for a while and you soon find where it is. For a start, people aren't careful what they say. You find people shouting across the road "Has so-and-so got any gear?" You just see kids openly smoking the stuff. I've seen kids smoking on trains, at stations, and generally just talking about it and not being in the least bit discreet. It's more widespread. We know loads of places in Bootle, Walton, Toxteth, Croxteth—everyone's using it. Every place is the same as everywhere else. You know everyone that's using it . . . That's another thing, there's lads coming from Southport, Birkenhead and that, coming to Bootle to score, and they get mugged as well.'"

That is the picture painted of things that are happening in my constituency.

The residents of the Church street estate in my constituency came to see me to describe what they said was becoming a no-go area. It is a place where drug pushers are moving into empty flats or being allocated flats and putting double iron doors behind the front door so that if there is a police raid they have time to put the drugs down the toilet; it is a place where people are coming in the night, during the day, on buses, or the train and in taxis from Southport and other areas to buy heroin, and where youngsters are going from door to door selling stolen goods to maintain their heroin habit. The residents told me that they wanted to go to the police, but were threatened that they would have their legs blown off if they interfered. They also told me that they felt there were always tip-offs to some of the pushers before raids took place and that that frightened them.

I wrote to the chief constable of Merseyside, Ken Oxford, asking him what was happening and he wrote back:

"I acknowledge that Bootle has become the worst area within the County of Merseyside for drug offences, but if I simply quote one figure, which is that no less than 247 persons have been arrested within one mile of the Strand precinct this year, you will appreciate that strenuous police efforts are being made to combat the problem. Of that number, no less than 141 were in the Church Street and Jersey Street estates."

The Strand precinct referred to is the centre of Bootle town, in my constituency. The chief constable admits that Bootle has become the drug trading centre of Merseyside. That figure of 247 is the tip of the iceberg. They are the easy arrests, the kids who have been picked up for possessing not necessarily heroin but marijuana, which is not as dangerous or damaging and is not the main source of the problem. In my constituency the hard drug, heroin, is the main problem. The people who are not reflected in that figure of 247 are the big pushers and the suppliers. They are not small individuals, because many of the pushers are drug takers who have been forced to push by the suppliers to maintain the habit. Often they have been hooked on the drug as schoolchildren outside the school gates in my constituency. The problem of getting the pushers and suppliers has to be addressed by the police, especially on Merseyside.

The resources that the police have on Merseyside are totally inadequate. There are only 28 officers in the drug squad for the whole of Merseyside. Now and then, I am told that six are deployed in the local authority area of Sefton. There are constant complaints about the lack of training for the ordinary policeman in the panda car or on the beat about what is happening on the drug scene and how to liaise with drug squad officers to deal with this massive drug problem. I hope that not only Home Office Ministers but, even more importantly, the DHSS and the Government generally will begin to look at this problem seriously and to arrange meetings with chief constables to discuss necessary training. Many people who are active in voluntary organisations or who work for local authorities could assist in training and achieve the co-operation that is needed between the police and those in the community who are trying to solve this problem in our schools and areas.

According to the Home Office, it takes about £1,000 a week to look after a heroin addict in community and support facilities. The Home Office estimates that about 5 per cent. of drug addicts are registered and that, to cater for them alone, expenditure of £70 million would be needed. Yet the Government have made only £2 million available to deal with this problem. More resources are needed.

There must be life after drugs. It is no good just taking a drug addict to a medically supervised hospital, rehabilitation centre or maintenance clinic for detoxification or providing counselling. Merseyside is developing acupuncture methods to relieve drug addiction, and I hope that the Government will investigate whether services can be made available for that programme. That electro-acupuncture service must be paid for. Its use should be considered in terms of the NHS. I would be happy to send the Minister details of the service that is being developed by a group of acupuncturists.

It is no good taking the addict out of his environment to a clinic, rehabilitation centre or hospital, taking him off drugs and then returning him to the same environment unless there is the back-up in the community to ensure that his life will not be the same again. People take drugs to escape and, if they return to the circumstances from which they wanted to escape, they will start taking drugs again. Those circumstances include a return to unemployment, which is a major problem.

I have highlighted the seriousness of the drug problem in my constituency and Merseyside. The metropolitan borough of Sefton—it is not my best friend as it has a Right-wing Conservative council, but it does do some good—has put in a submission to DHSS concerning seven drug counsellors and two day-care centres to deal specifically with the drug problem. One of those centres would be in Southport and the other would be in my constituency. We are still waiting for the DHSS to come up with the goods and provide the necessary funds or to say whether Sefton council will eventually receive those resources.The submission was made in February in conjunction with the area health authority. I am sure that the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) and the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) will join me in hoping that the Minister will take those messages to the DHSS. People from my constituency or from Southport, which is a part of Lancashire, have to travel considerable distances to treatment centres or clinics for counselling and assistance.

The so-called party of law and order has much to answer for. The young people in my constituency—I have seen this problem develop during the past three years—will be nicknamed the Thatcher generation or the lost generation. They are killing themselves by taking drugs because they have no hope, no jobs and no stake in the future. I can be as non-party political over a political problem as the next Member of Parliament, but I shall not be. This is a very political issue. It is about public expenditure, action on jobs and saving this generation of young people. If the Government do not save those young people, it will be on their consciences, not ours.

5.44 pm

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): When I heard the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) describe Conservative literature on crime prevention before 1979 I began to wonder whether he had read it as fully or as accurately as he had thought. My recollection is that the importance of detection and conviction was always stressed. That was one of the main reasons why so much emphasis was placed on increased manpower in the police force.

Mr. Allan Roberts: I have fought elections against Conservative opponents who put out white cards with black edges. Those cards did not mention the word "Conservative" but said, "I am the only candidate in this election who is in favour of reintroducing the rope." I have seen the filthiest law and order tactics used by Conservative candidates. If the Government claim that law and order has nothing to do with them and that the prevention of crime is not their responsibility, why does Conservative candidate after Conservative candidate fight elections on that issue?

Mr. Ground: As I understand it, it has always been fundamental to Conservative policy that detection and conviction are more important than any other matter. Whatever the hon. Gentleman has seen on election slogans, that belief has always been the gist of Conservative policy.

I welcome the statement in the Queen's Speech about the British Airports Authority and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's reference to British Airways, both of which measures will cause considerable changes in my constituency. I hope that BAA and BA employees will be given as good an opportunity to buy shares as was enjoyed by British Telecom employees. I hope also that a means of giving travel concessions to BA shareholders will be found. That will help to fill the empty seats in British Airways aeroplanes.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in relation to Sunday trading

"it is absolutely right to give people the choice."—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 24.]

The Government plainly attach importance to giving people the option whether to shop on Sundays. It is right to give people the choice whether to work on Sundays without risking their jobs in the retail trade and without facing the risk when going for an interview that they will not get the job. That right of choice is as important as the right of choice to shop on Sundays.

I welcome the statements in the Gracious Speech about control of Government expenditure. It is not enough to control the amount — it is necessary to review the purpose and objective of expenditure and to ensure within individual programmes that the money is sensibly spent. That applies to many Government programmes, but it is particularly pertinent to the urban programme, which has been mentioned by a number of hon. Members. The time has come to ask what are the objectives of this programme, whether they are being achieved and whether they could be better achieved by other policies. I understand that the employment creating aspects of the urban programme are already the subject of Government review, and I look forward to seeing the result.

I shall therefore concentrate on the remainder of the urban programme. As I understand it, the criteria for designating an area as a receiving authority for urban aid are principally the number of heads of households born in the new Commonwealth; the number of one-parent families; and factors relating to overcrowding, lack of housing amenities and loss of population. For first generation immigrants to this country, the need for English teaching, for example, is a special need towards which central Government can legitimately give additional funds in order to further such teaching. Similarly, extra expenditure may be incurred by local authorities with large ethnic communities to ensure that services are geared to the needs of the whole community.

If that be the object of Government policy, should not such help be available to all local authorities with large

[Mr. Ground]

ethnic minorities? Should not the help that is given be specifically aimed at solving that problem? In any event, is it justifiable simply to regard the number of heads of households born in new Commonwealth countries as a sign of deprivation?

In my view, the number of one-parent families is not a sign of deprivation. It may well be that to some extent they need services different from those required by the rest of the population, but it is an insult to one-parent families —who in many cases shoulder their difficulties well and tackle the problem of bringing up children in a wholly admirable way — to treat their presence as a sign of urban deprivation. When the Government are reviewing this policy, I would specifically ask that whole areas are not labelled "deprived" merely because of the presence of ethnic minorities or one-parent families. Instead, the Government should consider whether particular services are appropriate to those communities and whether central Government should give assistance towards them. Those two factors should certainly not be the cause of putting vast amounts of public money into particular areas for other purposes.

The trend in overcrowding, housing amenities and loss of population over the past 20 or 30 years shows that these problems are subsiding, and it is doubtful whether any special policies are appropriate to deal with those problems. It is clear from statistics in the inner city areas over the past 20, 30 or even 10 years that there have been striking improvements in the condition of the housing stock, the number of houses with bathrooms and indoor lavatories and the problem of overcrowding. The balance between housing stock and households has constantly improved and is continuing to improve. Is it therefore necessary to have special Government policies to assist in areas where the trends are already improving?

Loss of population should not in itself be a means of receiving Government assistance. The loss of population in inner cities has enabled overcrowding to be alleviated, and in most parts of inner London the housing stock is now less fully occupied than it was. There has been a loss of population, but that has presented the opportunity to improve amenities and the quality of life for those who remain.

The voluntary organisations play a part in the urban programme. In the review that is taking place, I particularly ask the Government to look at the content of the work of the voluntary organisations. They must ask whether these are genuinely voluntary organisations or merely facades for professional workers with no substantial voluntary participation. I suggest that the assistance given to voluntary organisations should be geared to the genuinely voluntary content of their work.

It may well be that in inner city areas other policies can do more for the inhabitants than special measures through the urban programme. I welcome the fact that the Gracious Speech refers specifically to the sale of public sector flats to tenants and to wider private sector involvement in the ownership and management of council housing. It is by no means clear to me how this will be achieved, but it is very desirable in many areas because for many people the council is at present the only option available. One of the benefits for such areas will be a genuine choice between public and private housing both to rent and to buy.

I should like to have seen a provision in the Gracious Speech to allow vacant property to be left free of rent control and even the letting of vacant property at less than two thirds of rateable value. That was always one of the exemptions from Rent Act control before the last war and for some years afterwards, and that would at least provide a small option for a number of people. I do not think that would offend Opposition Members if it led to the letting of houses at less than two thirds of their rateable value. That would hardly be politically controversial if it meant the letting of properties that would not otherwise be let.

In many cases, the provision of some property for owner-occupation in inner city areas has been the signal for young, enterprising people to refurbish derelict property and in the long run to make quite substantial profits both for themselves and their families.

Some houses in Fulham not far from where I live were condemned in the early 1960s and proposed for acquisition at site value by the local authority. Compulsory purchase orders were eventually cancelled and the houses are now selling for between £150,000 and £200,000. That is what can happen when enterprising people move into derelict property. They benefit financially and the housing stock is improved.

If the Government wish to help people in the inner cities or people who live in areas suffering from urban problems, I suggest that they provide money for open space and playing facilities for children. In my area people living in tower blocks would like to have a three-bedroomed house with a garden. If they cannot have that they want better play facilities and parks locally. I am sure that that is the experience of all hon. Members.

In our debate on inner city riots a few weeks ago a number of hon. Members referred to concrete jungles and urban deserts. One of the ways to deal with the problems to the satisfaction of the local people is to provide more public amenity land such as play space and gardens, as was intended after the war. I regret that neither central Government nor local government has insisted upon meeting that intention. Central Government could deal with urban deprivation in that way.

Whatever happens, I hope that the Government will examine the programme analytically and ensure that help is directed towards problems of national importance. Government help must be directed in ways that are seen to be acceptable and welcome by the people who are expected to benefit.

6.3 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The majority of people in Scotland will draw no comfort from the Gracious Speech. The hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) talked about unemployment and educational problems in south London. Unemployment is at a scandalously high level in many Scottish areas. In Greenock and Port Glasgow male unemployment is about 26 per cent.

Few people in Scotland believe that the current teachers' dispute will be resolved in the near future. In the absence of an independent pay review teachers should receive a fair and reasonable pay award. If that met with agreement in the teaching unions, they would be prepared to discuss sensibly new terms and conditions of service. The dispute must be settled soon in the interests both of the children and the teachers.

As to crime and law and order, it seems that the Government's chief concern in Scotland is to pursue and punish salmon poachers. Salmon fishery regulations take up a half of the one paragraph in the Queen's Speech devoted to Scotland. I should like the Government to pursue drug traffickers in the way that they intend to pursue salmon poachers, not that I have any sympathy for salmon poachers.

Law and order is not a party political issue and should not be commandeered as such by a party which, while in office, has presided over a huge increase in crime of all kinds. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said in a debate in the Scottish Grand Committee more than two years ago that

"there has been an arrogant assumption on the part of Conservative Members of Parliament that they have a monopoly of concern about crime figures and the growth of crime."—[*Official Report, Scottish Grand Committee*, 25 May 1982; c. 28.]

That criticism holds today. That arrogant assumption is seen by some Government Members as a way of staving off defeat at the next general election.

Law and order is of urgent concern to all our constituents. Fortunately, in Scotland good relations exist between the public and the police. There was some anxiety during the coal industry dispute and some allegations about heavy-handed policing but it can be said with confidence that generally the police are assisted by good relations. I do not expect the Secretary of State to disagree with that.

Scotland has had community policing for many years. We do not experience the ugly disputes that sometimes arise in some English areas between some chief constables and their police authorities. If law and order is a risky subject for politicians, politics is a dangerous activity for chief constables.

A dreadful increase in recorded crimes has occurred over recent years in Scotland. In 1978 crimes recorded numbered 334,957. In 1984 that had risen to 474,913, an increase of 41·8 per cent. The clear-up rate has remained remarkably and dismally consistent. In 1978 it was 30 per cent. and in 1984 it was 31 per cent. The clear-up rate for housebreaking was 19 per cent. in 1978 and 18 per cent. in 1984. That consistency remained despite a 6·7 increase in the number of police officers between 1978 and 1984.

Another deeply worrying increase has occurred—in the number of criminal offences involving the alleged use of firearms. In 1978 the number of such offences was 492 and 1984 it was 1,336. These are depressing statistics.

Scotland has experienced shock increases in drug crimes and drug seizures. The number of drug crimes rose from 1,500 in 1978 to 4,404 in 1984. The seizures of controlled drugs in the same period has risen from 1,275 to 2,955.

Many of those involved in drug addiction and drug-related offences are young people. *The Guardian* today stated:

"More than half of unemployed boys in the Edinburgh region, and more than a third of out-of-work girls, have used illegal drugs such as cannabis, LSD, cocaine, and heroin, researchers said yesterday. A survey of 1,036 school-leavers carried out by Dr. Martin Plant and a team from Edinburgh University shows strong links between drugs and the dole. Drug use among those who were students or had jobs was much lower."

Although it is difficult to show a close relationship between unemployment and crime, I believe that there is clear evidence of a strong link between unemployment, drug addiction and certain types of criminal offence. The *Glasgow Herald* recently stated:

"Senior police officials and drug squad officers have claimed that an increasing proportion of crime, particularly theft and housebreaking, has been attributable to increased criminality by illicit drug users supporting their habit."

Youngsters who become addicted to drugs will, in many cases, steal first from their parents, aunts and uncles. Then, I regret, they will indulge in housebreaking and other crimes. Many of those young people face an utterly hopeless future. In areas of Glasgow and other towns and cities in Scotland large numbers of young people live in decaying houses on bleak, ugly estates. For many of them there is no hope of a job or of transferring to a decent home in a high amenity area. There is no hope of positive change in their lives. For those deprived young people, the Gracious Speech could as well have been written in Latin or Greek.

The problem of drug abuse among the young is not one for the police alone. That was emphasised in the last annual report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland, who said that other agencies have become involved in the task of dealing with drug addiction and drug offences. Numerous other agencies must be given the resources to tackle the problem in an effective manner. A start could be made by increasing the number of front-line Customs officers. The present force does a splendid job, but it is desperately over-stretched. It requires many more resources and increased manpower.

We need a more humane and compassionate approach to the problems of unemployment and inadequate, decaying housing. This Government display no compassion or concern for the unemployed——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): Rubbish.

Dr. Godman: The Minister might shout "Rubbish", but I speak the truth for many thousands of people in my constituency.

I want finally to deal with alcohol abuse and alcohol-related crime. I am especially concerned about public drunkenness. We should seek to decriminalise alcohol-induced behaviour throughout Scotland and the remainder of the United Kingdom. We should set up a network of what is known in England as detoxification centres—we call them designated places. They would offer a more consistent policy towards public drunkards, which would encourage them to view their behaviour in a social and personal, rather than a criminal, context. Such a system would also reduce the amount of police and court time wasted in repeated dealings with habitual offenders, and would significantly reduce the prison population.

Under such a system, an individual would come within reach of helping agencies more frequently, and therefore have more opportunity to take advantage of the services available. One of the main aims of designated places should thus be to decriminalise the habitual drunken offender by accepting police referral of those arrested before they are charged. Emphasis should be placed on the sickness rather than the criminal element of drunken behaviour.

A number of researchers have estimated that each person brought to a designated centre or detoxification unit results in a saving of up to 12 hours of police time, and court time is also saved. The Magistrates' Association has

[Dr. Godman]

estimated that it costs £115 to process through the courts someone accused of a drink-related offence. If we add police time of £20 an hour and the cost of imprisonment which is not less than £120 a week, it means that every arrest resulting in two weeks imprisonment costs the nation up to £600.

The savings in police, court and prison time are considerable, but human and social benefits should also be considered. For the homeless offender, repeated processing through the criminal justice system has been shown to be both demoralising and ineffectual. The real needs and problems of such people are never met; indeed, they are seldom examined in any sensible manner. The self-perpetuating cycle of drink, court appearance and prison must be broken if the individual and society are to benefit.

For those with roots in the community, a home and a job, the stigma and disruption of arrest, court appearance and fines can destroy relationships and reputations without providing any benefit to the individual or the community.

There are a few principal dimensions of the problems on which action is necessary and to which resources must be committed. First, those who exhibit drunken behaviour in public must be dealt with in an effective and humane manner without recourse to prison. Secondly, the particular needs of the individual must be taken into account. Thirdly, we should replace penal sanctions with social provision.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Dr. Godman: I have not finished. I promise that I will not speak for as long as some Conservative Members. I shall finish in a few minutes. Conservative Members have been jumping up and down like the proverbial Jack-in-the-box.

The major concern of the overwhelming majority of people in the United Kingdom is to live in a peaceful, law-abiding and tolerable community. To that end, politicians at local and national levels, the Government, the public and the police must work together within the rule of law to deal with crime more effectively than hitherto. I do not believe that there is much hope for such unity of will and purpose while the present Government are in office.

6.20 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Opposition Members have sought to present the emphasis on law and order in the Gracious Speech as a smokescreen for the real problem, which is unemployment. However, it is interesting to note that virtually the whole debate has concentrated on law and order.

I wish to raise some other Home Office issues that arise out of the Queen's Speech but it would be a discourtesy to my constituents if, at the outset, I did not mention a subject of great concern to them.

It did not surprise me to hear the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), readily condemn those Labour authorities who have sought to prevent the police from giving educational classes in schools. It would not have surprised me on an earlier occasion, when he was Home Secretary or leader of his party, to have heard him condemn leaders of Labour authorities who condemned the police. Nor would it surprise me to hear the right hon. Gentleman condemn those who cause trouble on the picket lines.

Had the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) been as courteous in giving way to Conservative Members as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary was in giving way to Opposition Members, he might have been asked, for example, how much police time and money was wasted on the picket lines and why it took so long for himself and the Leader of the Opposition to condemn those who condemned the police.

My constituents are genuinely concerned about law and order and will welcome that portion of the Gracious Speech that shows that the Government intend to strengthen the powers of the police in combating disorder. They will also welcome, as residents of a coastal constituency and Channel port area, the powers that the Government intend to introduce to make sure that those who at present profit from trafficking in drugs are no longer so readily able to do so. My constituents will understand what the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) said about the horrors of drug abuse and will wish any penalty to be inflicted on those who traffic in that sort of misery.

At the end of the Gracious Speech we are told:

"Other measures will be laid before you."

The Home Office will not have responsibility for the fixed link arguments. However, it has responsibility for immigration and I believe that it is responsible for the control of rabies. I hope that Home Office Ministers will be ready to answer the flood of letters that even now my constituents are preparing to send the Government and that they will pass down the line the message that the prospect of a fixed link of any kind is viewed with dismay in east Kent. It will do, so far as we can see, no good and could cause great harm to a beautiful area of England. I warn the Government that opposition to the fixed link from that corner of England is likely to be vigorous indeed.

I welcome the provisions in the Gracious Speech for the enhancement of animal welfare. The new provision for the protection of animals used for experimental purposes will be supported in spirit, if not entirely to the letter, by the British Veterinary Association, the committee for the reform of animal experimentation and the fund for the replacement of animals in medical experiments, of which all-party group I am the chairman.

While we do not accept that all the provisions in the White Paper are perfect, our view is that the proposed legislation will be a major step forward, and I compliment my hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, on the amount of courageous work that he has done, at tremendous personal cost, in preparing this legislation.

It saddened me to receive this morning from an organisation known as Mobilisation a paper stating that it would be

"continuing opposition to the Government's intention to introduce new legislation on animal experimentation based on the supplementary White Paper".

The majority of people in Britain, never mind in Parliament, appreciate that a unilateral approach to animal welfare, which is what the Mobilisation team proposes, would not only be unworkable but would be immoral. To ban experimentation overnight in this country and simply

drive the problem overseas, and pretend that we had solved it worldwide, would be a nonsense and achieve nothing for the animals that that body claims it wishes to protect.

I am pleased to say that on that proposed measure, which appears to be only one of a few on the Home Office slate, I shall be in the Aye Lobby supporting the Government.

The Home Office also has responsibility for broadcasting. I regret that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, has temporarily left the Chamber because when we debate the televising of the House it may fall to him to explain how, if this brave new experiment goes ahead, it will be paid for. He seems already to have enough problems in financing the BBC without funding from this House 24 hours of television which nobody will watch.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) said that that debate should take place in full floodlight so that we could experience the heat that we were likely to witness when the television cameras came in. You, Mr. Speaker, and many hon. Members experienced that heat at the State Opening, and the lighting bars are still on view. That was a foretaste of what we shall be in for if hon. Members are foolish enough to concede to what they believe to be an innovation.

We have available to us already the microphones that are hanging before our eyes. I suggest, as a former television producer, that those who wish to see democracy enhanced should look to the microphones, to the broadcasting of the House, rather than to the televising of our proceedings.

We are in danger, on occasion, of pursuing change for the sake of change, and in that respect I come to the proposed alterations to the shop trading hours. The Prime Minister said that the legislation would be in line with the main recommendations of the Auld committee. I hope that that is not so because I do not wish to see wages councils perpetuated, and that was one Auld recommendation.

I accept that there is need for change and that the present Sunday trading laws have fallen into disrepute. But that does not necessarily mean having a free-for-all, which is the message that I am getting from my constituents. All my churches are opposed to a free-for-all on Sunday trading. While I do not normally wear my religion on my sleeve and I do not think that I am regarded as a "churchy" person, I do not mind admitting publicly that I am a member of the Church of England.

I respect the views of the Church, and you, Mr. Speaker, earlier in the day, in St. Margaret's, Westminster, read a lesson from Romans XII and told us that we should

"be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

For most people in Britain, Sunday is a day, perhaps the day, on which the mind can be renewed, in church, walking the dog, in some public hostelry or wherever. You also read to us that we should

"cleave to that which is good."

I believe—again, I am getting this message from my constituents—that at present, Sunday, warts and all, is pretty good. It would be sad if we were to implement change simply for the sake of change.

The Leader of the House said some months ago that there were two kinds of Member of Parliament, bishops and bookmakers. Were I a betting man or a bookmaker, I would lay hefty odds that when it came to the crunch, the majority of people in this country would sooner have Sundays left largely alone.

On the economic argument, there are five chambers of commerce in my constituency, and each is opposed to a free-for-all on Sunday trading. Add to that the weight of the view of USDAW, and we begin to see what the people really want. Let us not forget that about 5 million trade unionists voted Conservative at the last election. I do not doubt that many of them are members of the shopworkers' union. It is wrong for Conservatives to say that that is just a union point of view and should be dismissed. We should not dismiss it.

It was suggested earlier that people should really have the right to choose. I shall support the legislation when we have built into it the right of every man and woman not to work on Sunday if they choose not to do so, for all time —present employees and those who may be employed in the future.

I shall support the legislation only if we introduce measures to preserve the quality of Sunday. I received another paper this morning—it was a good post—from the National Consumer Council. It contained the result of some work carried out by Market Behaviour Ltd. It said:

"The chance to shop on Sunday would give the kiss of life to a day that for many is the dullest and most lonely of the week."

I believe that it would give the kiss of death to a day that for many is the most enriching, relaxing, refreshing and fulfilling of the week.

There is a compromise that members of all religions on both sides of the House could support. We should carefully study American laws. Massachusetts has solved the problem. That state has come up with answers that I believe most Members of the House could realistically support. I should take no pride in being a Member of a Parliament that destroyed the British Sunday

We are contemplating taking measures to allow shops to open on Sundays, but we shall still shut all our public houses on a hot Saturday afternoon. It saddens me that, in this welter of legislation, we still have no measure designed to reform our antiquated licensing laws. I understand the pressures on the Home Office and the demand for legislative time. That is not a criticism of my right hon. Friend and his team, but if one of my right hon. or hon. Friends or I were fortunate enough to be lucky in the ballot for private Members' Bills, and if we were to select some reform of the licensing laws in England and Wales, I hope that the Home Office would allow not a free-for-all but a little greater licence.

6.37 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I hope that the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) will accept my apologies if I do not follow the precise argument that he has put to the House. I gather from what he has said that we shall be seeing him frequently in the Opposition Lobby. We may have the opportunity to debate at some other time the points that he mentioned.

I should like to comment briefly on the point made by the hon. and learned Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground). He said that detection and conviction were central to the Government's approach to law and order. I understand that the Government do not especially wish to debate or consider the causes of crime. They adopt a different approach and talk about detection and conviction. They cannot have it both ways. If the

[Mr. Ron Davies]

Government wish to argue the case of detection and conviction, they must offer some explanation to the House and to the public for the 40 per cent. increase in crime in the period of their rule since 1979.

If the solution to that crime wave can be found in greater police activity, more detection and a greater number of convictions, the Government have failed. We have had additional policing but we still have a record crime level.

The Home Secretary said that he understood that the Opposition wished to concentrate more on the causes of crime. He referred to the problem of community decline. I hope that Conservative Members understand why we wish to study the causes of crime. I had a conversation last weekend with the police chief superintendent in my constituency. He said that the police could deal with the crime wave and the mindless vandalism, clear up all the cases of larceny, and crack down on hooligans, but it would mean a level of policing which would be unacceptable to any civilised society. It would mean policing with such a heavy hand that neither the Government nor the public would be prepared to accept it. If that attitude is shared by the Government, they must share with us an examination of the root causes of crime.

I do not apologise for saying that the Queen's Speech contained nothing of relevance to my constituency. I make no apology for detaining the House, just for a moment, with some of the economic statistics of my constituency. Wales has about 200,000 unemployed people. That is the highest level of unemployment since 1936. The unemployment rate is twice that of areas represented by Conservative Members in the south-east of England. If they have an unemployment problem in their constituency, they should imagine what the problem would be like if the numbers were doubled. Can they imagine what it is like to have the national average of one in five of the male population permanently out of work?

Wales has seen the greatest fall in the percentage of the population employed in manufacturing. Only 22·6 per cent. of our population is now engaged in manufacturing. That is the lowest figure of any of the standard planning regions in the United Kingdom with the exception of the south-east. Special circumstances apply there.

Mid-Glamorgan has seen the percentage of unemployment rise from 4·2 per cent. in 1974 to 19·7 per cent. in September 1985. Since September 1979, Mid-Glamorgan has had the highest percentage loss of jobs in England and Wales. An employment exchange in the centre of my constituency has an unemployment rate of 25 per cent. In the Rhymney valley, represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), there is an unemployment rate of 44 per cent. at the Pontlottyn employment exchange. Of that figure, 50 per cent. is long-term unemployment.

Looking at overall wealth, with the United Kingdom index of 100 in November 1984, Wales at 83·8 per cent. was the poorest of all standard planning regions in the United Kingdom. The sole exception was Northern Ireland. In Wales, 18 per cent. of all households depend upon social security benefits. Wales is second only to the south-west in having 9·1 per cent. of male full-time employees earning less than £100 a week.

In the local authority area which I partly represent, a housing survey conducted last month showed a staggering figure of 78 per cent. of council tenants eligible for housing benefit—about 12,000 houses. In the private sector the figure was 31 per cent. Is that the brave new world that the Government offer us? Does the Queen's Speech contain anything to ameliorate those conditions?

We are told by the Secretary of State for Employment that we have the youth training scheme—a marvellous range of opportunities for young people. All that they have to do is put their foot on the ladder; they then have the opportunity to climb to prosperity. Mid-Glamorgan has the lowest retention rate from the YTS in the United Kingdom. The figure for Wales is 43 per cent. Mid-Glamorgan has the lowest county average, with 37·7 per cent. In my constituency, only 33·7 per cent. of the young people on YTS schemes go into employment. If that figure does not worry Conservative Members, perhaps the figure of 1,431 registered job seekers in my constituency will. At the last count last week, the careers service had one job to offer. There were 1,431 young people seeking one vacancy.

Is it surprising, then, that we talk in Wales about the breakdown of our communities? Is it surprising that we say there must be some correlation between the growth of poverty and the growth of lawlessness? In a community where people have been thrown out of work and are dependent upon state benefits, there must be some correlation between their poverty and the increasing rate of housebreaking. There are thousands of young people with nothing to do and with no prospect of work. As the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday, they become involved in crime for kicks. Surely it can be no surprise when our young people and people of all ages react in that way, so that society begins to break down.

The Government say that they have certain solutions, and that they will give more licence to employers in the hope that that will provide more job opportunities. People in my constituency have seen the results of licence for employers. They have seen what the National Coal Board and its forerunners have done to our communities.

Transient employment has been stripped away by Government action, and we have seen what has happened to our environment. Employers have had the opportunity of providing employment on a short-term basis. They have taken advantage of the licence given to them by Government. They have taken advantage of the financial incentives to come to our communities. But at the first whiff of recession they pull up their roots and disappear, leaving us with a legacy of unemployment and a legacy of a despoiled environment.

The Government say that our workers must work for low wages. At a surgery in my constituency a fortnight ago, I met a man of 38 who had been made redundant for the fourth time. He was a married man with three children. His take-home pay was £74 a week. He was working for 41 hours a week and getting £10 less than he would have received on state benefits. He said, "I do it because I want to work. I know that if I were to accept redundancy, go on the dole and claim all the benefits that I am entitled to, I would be better off."

People have pride. They have belief in themselves. They have traditions, values, hope and courage. The people of the valleys in south Wales want the opportunity to use those resources. That is why people are working for poverty wages. That is why the Government's message that people must work for lower wages is unacceptable.

We are now offered the prospect of Sunday trading. It will not do a geat deal to provide extra employment in the Rhymney valley. The only difference is that people will be able to be unemployed for seven days a week instead of six. The measure will cause great offence and it will bring no benefit, yet that is the Government's approach to economic regeneration. We are told that our salvation will lie in additional opportunities for Sunday trading.

If Conservative Members cannot understand why we draw a correlation between unemployment and crime, I suggest that they look at the policies followed by the Government. They should examine the tensions which arise in our communities.

The Prime Minister says that crime results from original sin; that it comes from some innate evil in our population. I find that attitude offensive, patronising and incredible, because it means that the Prime Minister and the Government have no understanding of what life is like in Britain in 1985 outside the south-east of England and the favoured areas visited by the Prime Minister, when she deigns to go to the far north, or when she next deigns to visit Wales.

I have talked to senior police officers about the problems of vandalism in our communities. Our streets are not alight, people are not shooting at policemen, and we do not have riots, but we have increasing vandalism and housebreaking. We are all concerned about mindless, wanton vandalism. I assure Conservative Members that we will take second place to no one in our determination to create a peaceful, just and ordered society. They have no monopoly in their attitude to law and order. We take second place to no one.

When we discuss community policing with community leaders and senior policemen who are responsible for community policing, we have agreement. The hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) talked of the advantages of community policing. We are all in favour of policemen getting involved in our communities. We are all in favour of policemen organising educational and sporting activities. We are all in favour of them when they are able to open the local swimming pool on a Sunday afternoon for young people. We are all in favour of their involvement in youth clubs. But if those efforts offer the possibility of ameliorating social conditions, why is it that the Government, by their policy, close down our swimming pools and youth centres and deny financial assistance to voluntary groups? Why do the Government cut the expenditure of local authorities on such amenities? How can it be suggested that those expenditure cuts do not have any detrimental effect? Cannot the Government and Conservative Members see that contradiction? If there is validity in community policing and involvement, and if there is benefit in all those co-operative forms of community action, the Government must realise the damage that is being done to our communities by the economic, social and local government policies which they are following.

I accept that other factors may give rise to the crime wave, and I am not crediting the Government with the monopoly of responsibility for crime. My contention is that the elements of lawlessness and the breakdown of law and order are made inevitable by the tensions caused in our society as a result of the Government's economic policies. If there is one single condemnation of the Queen's Speech, it is that it has nothing to offer our depressed industrial communities and does not address the real problems which Britain is facing.

6.48 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I do not question and never have questioned the sincerity with which the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) puts forward his arguments in the Chamber, in the Welsh Grand Committee and in the other debates that we have concerning Wales, but he was very selective with his statistics.

We had the simplistic socialist argument about the correlation between unemployment and crime. At the end of his speech he said that there may be other factors linked with the increase of crime, but his central argument was simplistic, connecting it with unemployment. Is the hon. Member really telling us — I have asked him this question in the Welsh Grand Committee—that simply by the creation of more jobs the crime rate will come down? Is that his thesis? *[Interruption.]* I thought that it was the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) who was interrupting. If it had been, I would have said that he should not give himself airs because he is not a Welsh Member. Is the hon. Member for Caerphilly really saying that by the kind of massive reflation that the Labour party favours more jobs can be created and the crime rate reduced? That kind of massive reflation will be inflationary in its effect and will destroy jobs in the longer term. If there is one factor that is likely to relate unemployment to a rise in crime, it is raising people's hopes unfairly and unrealistically, only to dash them by the creation of jobs that will not last.

Mr. Ron Davies: I see no prospect at all of restoring any sense of vitality to our communities unless we can create employment, nor do I see any prospect of creating communities that are worth while, and in which people are happy, content and serene, unless we can increase public expenditure to solve the problems of lack of housing, lack of recreational facilities, and a poor environment. I see no solution to the problem of crime and no prospect of ameliorating the problems that we are facing in Welsh constituencies until we start to tackle some of the basic difficulties.

Mr. Raffan: The hon. Gentleman has fallen into the old trap that catches all Labour Members. I refer him to an article written by a former Labour Member who represented Birmingham, Ladywood, Mr. Brian Walden, who has now gone on to higher things. I always assume he left the Labour party in frustration because Labour Members refused to listen to his arguments of moderation and common sense. In an article that appeared in *The London Standard* earlier this week, he asked, in effect, how can we expect common sense in a political debate when all we hear at a time of increasing public expenditure is talk of cuts, cuts and more cuts?

The hon. Member for Caerphilly must produce a more realistic and sensible analysis. The assessment he has presented to us can be described only as simplistic. However, I do not want to disagree with him too much because he was a strong supporter of the Bill that I piloted through the House during the previous Session, to which I am about to refer.

We heard earlier the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) describe graphically the horrific drug problem in

[Mr. Raffan]

his constituency. It is not only urban areas that are affected by the drug problem; the problem stretches into the rural areas. I represent a Welsh constituency, which is a mix of rural and urban areas and there is a severe drug problem, even in the villages.

The hon. Member for Bootle said that it is the large suppliers whom we must pursue, and that is right. When the private Member's Bill that I introduced was considered in Committee — it is now the Controlled Drugs (Penalties) Act—I said that it was limited in its scope as it covered only one aspect of deterrence, which, in itself, is only one part of prevention.

I welcome the measures that are proposed in the Gracious Speech

"to provide courts in England and Wales with the power to confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking and to penalise the handling of such proceeds."

I note that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is occupying the Treasury Front Bench. When he replies, I hope that he will be able to tell us that the proposed measures for England and Wales will be extended to Scotland. The provisions in the Bill I introduced did cover the entire United Kingdom and I hope that the Government's measure will do so, also. The proposed Bill will provide the courts with another welcome weapon to deter drug trafficking and should increase our ability to prevent the spread of drug misuse. It is a badly needed weapon. Lord Lane is reported as saying in another place:

"Let me take even the lowest figure of 10,000 addicts in the country. It requires, at the lowest, £20 a day per addict to feed their addiction. That is £7,000 a year per addict. If one multiplies that by 10,000, that totals £70 million. Those figures can probably be multiplied by four.

But whether it is £70 million or £280 million, that money has to come from crime".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 30 January 1985; Vol. 459, c. 660-61.]

In addition, the money is going to criminals. It is not surprising that the Metropolitan police estimate that 23 per cent. of their targeted criminals are now involved in drug trafficking. Ten years ago, those men would have been involved in armed robbery and would have confined themselves to that. They have turned now to hard drugs, which they find infinitely more lucrative. It has been shown that some profit by as much as seven-figure sums over a limited period through the importation of drugs. It is clear that they will continue to do so unless they are deterred by the toughest possible system of penalties.

The Bill I introduced during the previous Session was supported by 11 sponsors, including the hon. Member for Caerphilly. They represented between them all the political groupings in the House and every shade and faction within them, from the bone-dry to saturated wets within the Tory party and—how can I put it tactfully?—from militant moderates to immoderate militants in the Labour party. I hope that we shall see continuing harmony in support of the measures that the Government propose.

When my Bill was read a Third time, the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk), who was then an Opposition spokesman on home affairs, raised some doubts on that. I am aware that the shadow Home Secretary has given a general welcome to the Government's proposals but I hope that the remarks of the hon. Member for Knowsley, North will be repudiated by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) when he winds up from the Opposition Front Bench. Anticipating the Government's proposed Bill, the hon. Member for Knowsley, North said:

"presumably it will shift the onus of proof to the alleged drug offender to show that his assets were not obtained during the course of his trafficking in drugs, and I am not sure that that will receive the support of the Opposition . . . it may be useful to point out now that the Minister should not assume that such a fundamental change in our criminal justice system and in the principle of an individual being innocent until proved guilty will obtain the support of the Opposition."—[*Official Report*, 19 April 1985; Vol. 77, c. 567.]

That was torpedoed neatly at the time by one of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues, the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), who pointed out that we already have the concept of the reversal of the burden of proof in taxation matters. There is no distinction between convicted drug dealers and those convicted of burglary or fraud; all gain financially from criminal activity. Neither the burglar nor the person convicted of fraud is allowed to keep the proceeds of his crime. Why should a drug trafficker be allowed to do so?

If a second torpedo is required to destroy the argument of the hon. Member for Knowsley, North, it was supplied by Lord Denning in another place when my Bill was being considered in Committee. He referred to a case that was heard in the Court of Appeal in 1983 that is known as the Chief Constable of Kent *v.* V. and Another. In that case a man was reasonably believed to have stolen cheques and goods but had not been charged. He was suspected of realising the moneys, putting them into one bank and then transferring them to another bank account. The chief constable successfully brought proceedings for an injunction before the man was convicted to freeze the moneys before they could be withdrawn from the bank and laundered further. The reversal of the burden of proof is not novel. It has already been established in English law.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I remind the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, in opening the debate on the Gracious Speech, said:

"The proposals to combat the awful rise in drug selling, drug taking and drug-related crimes will gain support in principle and, depending upon the precise proposals, I suspect support in practice during their process through the House."—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 13.]

Mr. Raffan: I am aware of that. I do not have to be reminded of what the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday. He spoke of agreement in principle and I am talking about a basic detail of the Bill, which is the reversal of the burden of proof, about which there has been some dispute. I should like the hon. Member for Garscadden to clear up the issue. I thought that it would be helpful to give him the opportunity to do so later this evening. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) would have helped the House more if he had intervened to repudiate unequivocally the comments of the hon. Member for Knowsley, North.

Just as Parliament should ensure that the efforts of law enforcement agencies are supported by making available to the courts penalties that act as real and effective deterrents to drug traffickers so we should ensure also that the efforts of both Customs and Excise and the police are supported by making available to them the resources that they require—in money and manpower—to catch drug traffickers in the first place. The legislaton that the Government propose will be of no effect and have no value

unless drug traffickers can first be produced in the courts. During the Akamah case the Lord Chief Justice remarked that few of the big fish among suppliers have been caught.

I welcome the Government's announcement that further Customs officers are to be posted abroad, to the Indian subcontinent, parts of Europe, the Caribbean and South America. I welcome, too, the announcement earlier in the year of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department that 150 more Customs officers are to be appointed who will specialise in drugs. I hope that my hon. Friend will not hesitate to recommend a further increase in these numbers, as he promised in Committee when my Bill was proceeding through the House, if he feels that that is necessary.

I welcome the announcement that the Home Office made in July on the formation of the national drugs intelligence unit at Scotland Yard, which should help to improve co-ordination between Customs and Excise and the police. Welcome too was the simultaneous announcement, referred to this afternoon by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, that there is to be a 20 per cent. increase—an additional 200 men—in the strength of the regional crime squads so that each can have its own drugs wing. However, I am concerned as to whether this increase is enough. Two hundred men to be shared between 43 forces means less than three men more for each area.

Mr. David Owen, the chief constable of north Wales, an area that includes my constituency, recently said that because his force is 60 officers under strength, he cannot contemplate any increase in his drug squad. In north Wales drug offences have increased dramatically in the past few years. In 1978, there were 292 drug offences, none involving heroin. By the end of the first eight months of last year, 826 drug offences, half involving heroin, had been recorded.

It is clear that in north Wales we have an escalating and extremely serious drug problem. The need for extra police officers to concentrate on this problem is indisputable. I hope that, in view of the words of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary this afternoon, there will be a prompt response by the Home Office to north Wales' indisputable and obvious need.

I welcome and wholeheartedly support the measures against drug traffickers in the Queen's Speech, but if such legislation, once enacted, is to be effective, we must provide even greater manpower support to the police so that they can catch the drug traffickers in the first place.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before I call the next hon. Member, I draw attention to the fact that a large number of hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. If they follow the good example of the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), all will be called.

7.1 pm

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): I shall be the first to try to put that advice into operation.

Various interesting things have been said in the debate and one of the most interesting came from the hon. and learned Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) who said that in law and order we need some fundamental analysis to try to discern the basic causes of the problems, so that we can fight those problems and deal with the symptoms.

It is sad that such a high political profile has been put on law and order matters. I note that, in the newspapers, law and order comes second only to unemployment as a political issue. Therefore, the ordinary members of the public will conclude that, because there are votes in it, it has assumed a high political profile. That is a pity because it is potentially a lethal problem and anybody who has seen any society in which law and order has broken down will know that there is no freedom in such a society.

I have been in the Lebanon a good many times, and over the years I have seen law and order disintegrate there. That has led to total chaos. Any party that claims to be a party of radical change needs law and order more than a party that claims to be one of the status quo. It is self-evident that law and order has a worse record in inner city areas where unemployment and social deprivation are worse. The depressing thing about that is that it was true 150 years ago. Anybody going to one of the recesses of the House and taking from the shelves some of the blue books analysing the problem, particularly that resulting from the visit that the commissioners made to the Welsh valleys in the 1880s, will see that that proposition was true then. We have not made much progress in improving conditions in the inner-city areas.

Many people in this country still have a stereotyped image of the criminal. What is a criminal? Who are these people who break the law? I noticed in another part of the Gracious Speech the sentence:

> "Measures will be introduced to establish a new regulatory framework for the financial services sector".

That sentence reveals much more than the debate has so far implied. Many people see criminals as part of the Bill Sykes syndrome—a man who wears a striped jersey and a mask and carries a sack over his shoulder with "swag" on it and breaks into jewellers or houses.

Unfortunately, the really big money crime is fraud, and big-time fraud in particular, which is permitted in high places. It is created not by ignorant men but by people who have had expensive educations, who know their way around the world and through balance sheets and who are sharp when it comes to criminal opportunities. It is disturbing that big financial crime is on the increase, and I would guess that much of it goes without detection simply because the police and the authorities do not have the manning, expertise and a good many other advantages to keep abreast of it. All this crime is committed in a highly sophisticated way. Two sentences in the *Financial Times* sum up the problem:

> "One of the biggest headaches facing banking and securities regulators as the City revolution gathers pace is what to do about the growing incidence of business fraud. Public awareness of the problem has been raised by a series of scandals in the City."

Such crime is becoming more acute with the emergence of sophisticated information transfer technology. There is now a whole new species of computer crime, which is becoming increasingly difficult to detect. The age of the computer criminal, with great and highly technical expertise, is very much with us, and the misdemeanours that he commits are becoming more and more difficult to detect. Secondly, the Government desire to scrap regulations and the complex of rules and control systems in favour of more laissez-faire and the free enterprise approach makes a more favourable environment for such criminals. Making a bonfire of regulations and controls is likely to lead to an increase in such crime.

Another disturbing thought is that some business managements in the City, I am told, will often try to hush

[Mr. Ken Weetch]

up such crime for the sake of the good name of the business. Much of it goes undetected; it never reaches the light because of "reputation". I pay tribute to the police fraud squad, which very often consists of a group of ordinary people with no specialised education, facing massive technical problems of crime and misdemeanour. They do very well to achieve such a record.

All of us should pay tribute to the police fraud squad for carrying out a difficult job against heavy odds. They have to contend not only with the criminal but also with those who try to cover up for the sake of the commercial reputation of the enterprise. Unless something is done, commercial crime in the City will get worse. A great deal of it is undetected and it is likely to remain undetected.

This type of crime has certain social characteristics. Much of today's debate has divided the causes of criminality into two parts. The first argument relates to original sin: that it is in the nature of man to carry out nefarious acts and that one must therefore impose barriers to circumscribe those tendencies. The second argument is that crime is generated by social conditions: that it is a matter of environment more than anything else. I suspect that the truth lies in a combination of the two. There is a definite social characteristic to the type of crime that I am describing. Far from being rough hooligans, those who get away with the large financial crimes in this country have often had an expensive independent education. They act with ease in the best restaurants. They are not the great unwashed. Indeed, they are the jacuzzi-bathed bourgeoisie.

Mr. Maclean: I am loth to stand up after the hon. Gentleman's description of these criminals, but I do not count myself as one of them. I agree with him that this type of fraud is a major problem and that what we know about it is only the tip of the iceberg. Does he agree that in the case of this type of crime there can be no correlation with unemployment? Many Opposition Members have today said that the root cause of crime lies in unemployment. I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree with me that unemployment has nothing at all to do with the criminality of the public school bourgeoisie. Why, therefore, are they criminals?

Mr. Weetch: I began my speech by saying that I thought that in certain circumstances unemployment and social deprivation lead to an increase in crime, but this is not the only cause. Some of those to whom I have referred are motivated by the principle of getting rich quick by speculation, fraud and social deception. Speculation and the get-rich-quick principle is to be seen in the City from time to time, but since I am not a City man I speak not from the inside but from the outside.

In a careful analysis on 6 June 1984, *The Economist* said that not only is this type of fraud and commercial crime on the increase but that the criminals consistently seem to be winning. It said:

> "Only the dumb, the naive or the unlucky will land in the dock."

The clever criminals will launder the money. They will have bank accounts in Switzerland or Lichtenstein and they will operate through a string of offshore companies. Often the crime is discovered only years later when somebody accidentally notices something in the accounts or finds that receipts and invoices have been falsified.

This is the big financial crime in our society. I am not referring to the down-and-out who gets caught for pinching half a sack of coal in south Wales from the National Coal Board. I am referring to those who are defrauding the country, and business, of millions of pounds. By the time the criminals are apprehended, if ever, they will be basking in the sun doing very nicely, thank you.

Mr. Ashby: The hon. Gentleman makes a great deal of sense; but is not part of the problem the fact that for police officers this is a less glamorous crime and they are not very keen to investigate it? It is also a crime that is very difficult to understand. Juries often do not convict because they do not understand the facts that have been presented to them. The result is that there is less incentive for police officers to investigate because they will not achieve a satisfactory result. Should we not therefore consider the introduction of a selective jury system so that those who understand finance can consider these cases?

Mr. Weetch: I do not know. I have found some of the fraud cases which have been extensively reported very difficult to understand. I do not know how the ordinary man in the street can understand their tortuous complexities. It would take a technical expert of great experience to understand the labyrinthine crime of fraud and other related matters. I have an open mind about how to deal with it. I should be willing to consider any suggestion that brought more justice to bear on such cases.

Is the Secretary of State planning to try to eradicate the big financial crime which is difficult to detect and for which it is difficult to secure a conviction? May I refer him to what his hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston said a few minutes ago: what analysis has the Secretary of State made of this aspect of the problem, and could he advise the House as to what is a good way forward?

7.18 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): First I apologise to the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) for not dealing directly with the points he raised. I do not doubt his sincerity and I accept much of what he had to say. However, I wish to direct attention to 13 words in the Gracious Speech. They are of short, sharp, uncompromising simplicity:

> "A Bill will be introduced to remove statutory restrictions on shop opening hours."

Some right hon. and hon. Members heard my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House say earlier this afternoon that those who have misgivings about this can expect a visitation of the instant charm of the Patronage Secretary. I await that experience with eager anticipation. I am one of those Conservative Members who have profound and growing apprehension about the course upon which the Government seem to be embarking.

Nearly two years ago I submitted evidence to the Auld committee. Among other things, I argued against the complete liberalisation of shop opening hours. On 20 May the House turned its attention to the recommendations of the Auld committee, and I was one of about 20 Conservative Members who voted against the acceptance of those recommendations.

The intervening five and a half months have increased rather than decreased my apprehension. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) summed up

simply the common ground among all hon. Members when he said that the Shops Act 1950 was totally unacceptable. We do not dispute that there is a manifest need for change. There are anomalies bordering on the farcical in the Act. Shopping trends, demands and needs have changed radically since the 1950s.

However, I fear that we may be moving from something that is silly and unacceptable to something that is positively dangerous. I shall refer to various effects of total liberalisation that could harm society, but the point to bear in mind is that the 1950 Act is essentially harmless. The Act is illogical and stupid, it may inconvenience and irritate, but it harms nobody. Total liberalisation would take us into uncharted waters and I fear that there are potential dangers. The proposed legislation may contain safeguards, but I have doubts about how safeguards can be included which would be consistent with the declaration that there should be no statutory restrictions on shop opening hours.

I value very much the dialogue that I have established in recent months with my local branch of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers. I readily confess that I had no previous contact with the union. I hope that it would agree that we have established a worthwhile dialogue. I have learnt something about the conditions of employment of many people who work in shops. For almost the majority, the hours are long and the pay is low and their collective bargaining position is weak. I fear that the total liberalising of Sunday trading would result in the exploitation of shop workers.

When we debated Sunday trading in May, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), the then Home Secretary, said that it was the Government's intention to include safeguards for "established workers". The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) intervened to seek clarification and the Home Secretary agreed that "established workers" meant those currently working in shops and that protection would not necessarily apply to those not yet working in shops, that those who did so in future would not be protected.

I have heard anecdotal evidence — the accuracy of which I cannot guarantee — suggesting that bad employers, who are a minority, are beginning to make threats amounting to exploitation of existing workers. That is a matter for grave concern. I fear that the Bill may not contain adequate safeguards for people currently working in shops and for those so employed in the future.

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Is my hon. Friend aware of the Scottish experience? There is no exploitation of workers. Financially, they are better off if they work on Sundays. The uptake of Sunday employment in shops is surprisingly low.

Mr. Hunter: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her intervention. I am increasingly aware of the Scottish experience and I am delighted that Sunday trading in Scotland has not resulted in exploitation. Nevertheless, I am worried that the proposed legislation may not contain adequate safeguards for shop workers in England and Wales.

My second area of concern comes under the general heading of environmental factors. Many out-of-town or edge-of-town shopping centres are growing up, often dominated by supermarkets. They are often located in or near residential areas and attract a great deal of traffic. There is a worry that a free-for-all on Sundays will result in environmentally unacceptable developments in many areas.

I make that point with some personal feeling, because that fear led to shop hours becoming an emotive and controversial issue in Basingstoke and also led to the borough council enforcing the 1950 Act. I wonder whether the Bill that we are awaiting will contain any safeguards to guarantee the peace and quiet to which people are entitled on Sundays.

I stress most my third area of concern. This is the impact of the total liberalisation of shop hours on small shops — those on estates, arcades or precincts, the traditional corner shops and village shops. Some small shops are struggling to survive. They make ends meet, to a great extent, by enjoying a captive part of the market. They often stay open late in the evenings and open on Sundays more often than their major rivals.

Some argue that if shops cannot compete they should not survive. I reject that argument. Commercial interests and market forces should be our servants and not our masters. Small shops play a vital part in the lives of many towns and villages. They provide a community service as well as a commercial service. Community identity is important. As a number of hon. Members have said, it is declining in many towns. I fear that an important, albeit small, feature of our community life will disappear through the liberalisation of Sunday trading.

All my comments have been made without reference to what we refer to as the traditional feature of Sunday as the day of Christian worship. In the past few weeks, an increasing number of constituents have written to me saying that on religious grounds they oppose a free-for-all on Sundays. I am not ashamed to say that I wholly accept and endorse those arguments.

The secularisation of Sundays started a long time ago and will no doubt continue. But it will not continue with the aid of my vote, nor, I believe, with the votes of many of my hon. Friends.

7.28 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Before turning to the main subject of the debate, I wish to refer to some other matters in the Queen's Speech.

Labour Members will oppose with all their power the gas privatisation Bill. It is unnecessary. We should keep this important energy supply industry under public ownership.

In the not too distant future we shall have to introduce a substitute for natural gas as we prepare for the running out of North sea and Irish sea reserves, and only public enterprise can guarantee a supply in the years ahead by properly planning an all-purpose energy policy.

I also view with great worry the proposal to review the social security system. That subject will be debated vigorously in the coming year. The proposed measure will affect many of the poorer sections of the community and will hit the most deprived people. That must be wrong.

I support any measures that will make it easier for people to claim. The present system is complex, but we must ensure that the public are not misled by the Government being allowed to get away with pretending to

[Mr. Peter Pike]

make the system easier when their purpose is to save public expenditure. Many people will lose benefits and be made worse off by the review.

The Queen's Speech states that the Government will

"require larger local authority airports to be formed into companies, and to regulate certain airport activities."

I am worried about the long-term implications of that policy. Coming from the north-west, I have a very high regard for Manchester airport, which was set up through the foresight of the Manchester city council and has been developed by the city council and the Greater Manchester council. The airport has been a tremendous success without Government assistance, but I have fears for its future in view of the long-term implications of the policy.

The hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) referred to Sunday trading and made many of the points that I would have made. I share his anxiety about the proposals outlined in the Queen's Speech. The present law contains many anomalies and there needs to be changes, but that does not mean that we should scrap all regulations governing shop trading hours. We must be extremely careful if we tread that path.

At present it is possible to find one local authority turning a blind eye to the law and not applying it, while other authorities try to apply it as sensibly as possible. While the present law exists the Government should attempt to make all local authorities apply it equally.

There will be inflationary implications once the proposed measure goes through because no extra spending capacity will be created by trading on seven days instead of six. If shop workers are paid extra for working on Sundays, as they should be, costs will increase. I fear the implications of increased costs for small traders. I always worry on a Friday evening when I see the news about the week's job losses and gains. When it is reported that a superstore has opened creating, say, 400 jobs, the report never says how many people in smaller shops will go out of business or operation as a result. I accept that there is a need for some superstores, but the proposed policy has serious implications for many people in the industry. While many traders involved with Sunday opening have said that they will man their businesses with volunteers, once the policy is under way workers will soon be told that if they do not want to work on Sunday they cannot work at all. There must be adequate safeguards for them.

I sympathise with the difficulties of people who work on Sundays because I worked in an industry which had to work on Sundays. We manufactured glass and it is impossible to turn a furnace off at weekends. I very much value Sundays as I only got six Sundays off per year in the 10 years prior to becoming an hon. Member. I believe that many people in this country will regret losing their Sundays off.

In the long run it will not simply be the people who work in shops who will suffer. As other traders gradually open on Sundays there will be a need to open car parks. If that happens, car parks will not be provided free of charge on Sunday when payment is requested on other days. As public demand for these car parks increases so the councils and other operators will start to charge and more people will have to work. More public transport will be needed—if there is any public transport left after the Government's Transport Act takes effect. I have serious worries about the implications of the Government's proposals and I shall examine the legislation carefully.

I have always said, on all platforms and at all times, that the Labour party believes in law and order. The contrary view is a fallacy built up by the media and by the Conservatives and is entirely untrue and unrealistic. Any sensible political party must want people to be able to live their lives in peace and quiet without fear of robbery, violence or other crime. The Labour party is and always will be in favour of law and order.

That does not mean, however, that we cannot criticise the police from time to time. No one in this country is above criticism. Members of Parliament and the press can be criticised and I see no reason why we should accept that the police must always be right in all their decisions. I believe that there should be more political input and I hope that the next Labour Government will move towards regional government with responsibility for police, water, hospitals and other matters. I am not convinced that the old style watch committees were the perfect solution, particularly in small boroughs. I certainly had strong reservations about the watch committee that used to operate in Burnley. That does not mean, however, that we do not need some body to which the police are ultimately responsible for overall guidelines on policy and direction. The police, of course, would continue to have power to determine day-to-day running. No Labour Member has ever suggested that they should be told exactly how to carry out every aspect of their job.

Under the present Government, since 1979, in England robbery has increased by 99 per cent., violence against the person by 20 per cent., criminal damage by 55 per cent., and burglary in a dwelling by 89 per cent. Those figures have been given before but they bear repeating to emphasise exactly what is happening. I do not accept the Prime Minister's inference yesterday that people are born to sin and that certain people are bound to go that way. We must look beyond that attitude to discover why the crime rate is rising. We also need to give the police better training and better facilities. We need more community policemen. More policemen need to be released from paperwork at police stations to go out into the streets on foot so that they can talk to the people whom they are there to protect.

Whether people like it or not, it is not a political comment to say that people in this country have less confidence in the police now than at any time this century. That is a regrettable trend. There are a number of reasons for that decline in public confidence in the police, but one welcome movement has been getting the police back on community beats. That is the right way to build a better relationship and it should be encouraged.

I am also worried by the use of the expression, "inner city problem". I accept that there are problems in the inner cities, but there are also problems in other areas. The borough that I represent cannot possibly be called an inner city area. It is designated under the urban aid programme because of the deprivation in the area, but the constituency includes large rural areas. We have problems and, in proportion to the area of the town, they are just as important as those of the inner-city areas and they cause similar results. We have to accept, irrespective of whether the Government agree, that housing and unemployment contribute to present circumstances. The Government must do something to get people back to work. They must

recognise the problems, especially for the long-term unemployed who have no hope of a job and who know that, as long as this Government remain in office, they will have no opportunity of one.

It is an appalling fact that, in 1985, a man of 40 who is made redundant can be told that he might as well consider himself retired. I certainly would not have wished to consider myself retired at 40. Young people leaving school have no prospect of a real job. We must do something to give people that prospect.

The Government must deal with the housing problem. It is no good their pretending that there is no problem and putting a little more money in, because housing needs a lot more money. The Government will be building up a major slum problem for the next decade if they do not act now—indeed, take long-term action—to deal with the housing crisis in the public and private sectors.

I see the problems of old terraced housing in my constituency. People cannot apply for a repair or an improvement grant because the council does not have sufficient money even to meet mandatory grants, such as intermediate grants. One house becomes derelict and, before long, the whole terrace will have to be pulled down. There are council estates where the council cannot improve, modernise and repair the houses because of an insufficient HIP allocation. Nevertheless, the Government force up rents and fail to recognise the relative cost of living in different areas. In my constituency incomes are lower than those in London. The Government fail to recognise that council houses in my constituency may be sold for only £6,000 to the sitting tenant if the full discount applies. People can buy a modernised terraced house for £10,000 or £11,000 in the Burnley area. Earlier, the hon. and learned Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) spoke of houses being sold for between £100,000 and £150,000. One could buy a whole terrace of houses in my constituency for that.

More money is needed for recreational facilities. People are working shorter hours and they need something to do in their leisure time. A greater variety of recreational facilities must be provided to suit people's needs. It is important that the Government enable local authorities to meet those requirements.

I welcome the steps that the Government are taking to try to stop drug trafficking, but it is important that even more is done. Although additional Customs officers have been appointed, a great many more will be needed if we are to stop drugs coming in. I accept that there should be heavy penalties for drug trafficking—we need such a deterrent because the people who push drugs are guilty ultimately of murder because drug taking can lead to death.

We must also recognise that more facilities are needed to deal with addicts who are trying to get off drugs. There is no point spending a lot of money to get a person drug-free and then to put him back in exactly the same block of flats or back on the dole because, after a few months, without the proper back-up, he will go back to drug-taking. From talking to Dr. John Strang, who is head of the regional drug dependancy unit in the north-west, I know that the available resources are inadequate to deal with the medical side of the problem, and there are others. We need people who can ensure that people with drug problems are helped with other difficulties. People on drugs have major problems that can cause family friction. We must ensure that families get all the necessary assistance. The drug problem affects the whole of the country. It is not confined to inner-city areas. Indeed, it is quite prevalent in towns such as Burnley and in the whole of the Lancashire area. We must ensure that we put aside sufficient resources to deal with the problem.

Everybody has a right to live in peace in their own homes and to walk out safely on the streets, in parks and in town centres. We must ensure a return to such circumstances. The police must be trained and given adequate resources, and they must not come down with a heavy hand. The Government must face up to a host of issues which go much wider than policing.

7.46 pm

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): All I have to say about Sunday trading is that I gave up the traditional Sunday and started trading the day that I was elected to this House.

I warmly welcome the proposal to privatise airports and look forward to the privatisation of the East Midlands airport and the advantages to that airport of being able to attract venture capital. If we are to attract such capital to municipal airports, we must be able to show that we shall be able to do that if the majority shareholding of a privatised airport remains with councillors with no knowledge of business practices. More than 50 per cent. of the share capital should be put on the market so that the public can participate and outside directors with the requisite expertise can be brought in. That would give investors confidence.

We have had a White Paper on public order legislation. Today's debate has got better and better, although it got off to a bad start. The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) gave no solutions. Rather he gave us a tirade about what has happened in the past six years. Combating disorder and crime is not made easier by Opposition Members siding with rioters. It does not help when they advocate the breaking of laws or when they take part in organised marches which stretch the freedoms of lawful assembly to the limits.

I wonder how people can expect justice from the Opposition when it is viewed in a one-sided way. We have had a year of talks about the right to picket. Every time anyone talked about the right to work, we had jeers from the Opposition. I am not surprised that they are trying to belittle and ridicule the Conservative party's achievements because they know that the electorate consider that it is the party that gives them the greatest hope.

Last year, during the miners' strike, we saw violence and intimidation on the picket lines, and it was never denounced at the time. That intimidation and violence is continuing. Two miners in my constituency have moved from south Wales. The stories they tell of what happened during the strike and what was happening until a few months ago are horrifying. The hatred, unchristian thinking and lawlessness that persist in south Wales towards those who exercised their right to work are astounding. One person is still begging for a transfer to Leicestershire because he was one of the working miners and he is still subject to intimidation. I remember undertakings being given in the House, but I want to see them turned into something concrete in the case of that miner. He is the only person left; his family is subject to violence and intimidation and his life is absolute hell.

Some people who have moved from south Wales to Leicestershire cannot sell their homes. The local miners

[Mr. David Ashby]

will not let people buy them. They are ensuring that those homes remain unsold. That is an example of intimidation and violence that must be dealt with. I should like to hear that denounced by the Opposition; if they really believe in law and order, they will denounce that behaviour and not just shrug their shoulders and say, "That is what happens when passions are aroused."

If the Labour party believes in the rights of those who want to work and truly denounces violence, perhaps it will side with the new union that consist of miners who worked during the strike, and recognise its members who are seeking peaceful solutions within the law. Perhaps that is another issue that has been fudged by the Opposition.

The Opposition have cried time and again about a 40 per cent. rise in crime. We hear the same old story from the Opposition, who exploit unemployment. They have looked at the undeniable rise in crime, especially crimes of violence, and have tried to relate unemployment to that rise. Unemployment is a major problem and we are deeply concerned about it, but I do not think that there is any real evidence of a relationship between unemployment and the rise in crime. The Opposition exploit unemployment, inner-city deprivation and decay when they try to explain that rise in crime, but I think there are other reasons.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman should make sure that his brain is in gear before he engages his mouth. Several things that he said are misleading the House — unintentionally, I am sure. For a start, when I asked my private notice question today, the Home Secretary and his junior Minister were before the House because they had broken the law. The hon. Gentleman did not say anything about that. I should like to hear his views. Secondly, and more important, no one in the Opposition has said that crime and unemployment are directly linked. We are saying that there is a complex set of issues that include long-term youth unemployment and deprivation. That is not just our view, but has been shown by Home Office research. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the Home Secretary is wrong?

Mr. Ashby: Member after Member has spoken about that link, including the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who said that he blamed crime on unemployment, deprivation, division and decay. To say that there is such a relationship is wrong. It is exploiting the facts and trying to fit them together. It is a gross exploitation of people who are suffering from the effects of unemployment. As the Prime Minister said, to suggest that the unemployed are dishonest is entirely wrong.

Mr. Soley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashby: No, I shall not give way.

I have found that there is a direct relationship between crime and broken homes. Young people can understand the death of a member of the family, but they cannot understand divorce. Often broken homes give rise to juvenile crime. There has been a tremendous rise in the incidence of divorce.

Another reason for violence is sometimes to be found in bad education, particularly illiteracy. We have problems in education, particularly in the inner cities, and there is high illiteracy. Because people cannot express themselves well, that gives rise to violence.

Another interesting point is that there is a direct relationship between food additives in food and violence. A study at the Great Ormond street hospital shows a direct relationship between behaviour and food additives or the type of food eaten. Several eminent doctors say that fast food, which more people are eating, has been a major cause of the rise in some violence. We should take that into account.

Mr. Hunter: I should like to place on record the work that has been done in Basingstoke during the past two years on that subject. A clinic has devoted a great deal of time and attention to exploring the link between food and behaviour.

Mr. Ashby: I am aware of that research, which has shown that there is a link.

The rise in crime, especially the rise in crimes of violence, is well worth further research. I hope that the Home Office believes that that research should be conducted. It could be profitable.

It has been said that lack of money is the cause of crime, but I have come across few cases in which people said that they committed the crime because they did not have food or were terribly short of money. Those few cases mainly involved shoplifting, especially by elderly people whose pensions had not stretched to buy a tin of salmon or similar item. Perhaps the people involved in those sad cases should not have been charged.

Most of the major crimes of dishonesty are committed not by the unemployed or those who lack money but by those who are greedy or out to make a fast buck. There is therefore no relationship between such crimes and unemployment, inner-city decay and similar problems. Criminals often come from criminal families. If the father has been a criminal, there is often a tendency for the son to be a criminal. The reason may be lack of leadership and parental guidance.

During the miners' strike there was much violence— cars were turned over, houses were burnt down and people were injured. Many of those involved in the riots in Brixton or, closer to my constituency, in Leicester were arrested, tried and acquitted. There are certain fundamental liberties that we must not erode—the jury system, the burden of proof and the standard of proof, which is that no person is guilty until he is proved beyond doubt to be so. It is clear in all those cases that the problem was not the law or the charge but the evidence. The evidential difficulties are obvious in cases involving hundreds of people milling around — some of them throwing missiles, some attacking police officers and others just pushed along with the crowd, committing no offence. This is a fundamental point and it is where all the new legislation that we shall enact goes wrong. Not one of the Bills deals with the evidential difficulty which repeatedly confronts us.

People who broke laws concerning affray and riotous assembly would have been convicted if there had been evidence, but it was not available. It was clear that the only evidence involved a police officer saying, "I saw a man in a red shirt, whom I later identified as Mr. X, breaking a car window with a stick. I then saw a man in a blue shirt, whom I later identified as Mr. Y, turn the car over." At the trial, pictures were produced showing 10 to 15 people in red shirts and 10 or 15 people in blue shirts. The evidence had no value and the cases failed. That happens

repeatedly. There must be certainty of evidence; that is why so many cases have resulted in acquittals. It is not right to convict a person on suspicion. These points are fundamental and sacred and must be protected.

We have to deal with laws that get around the evidential difficulty. In many cases, the only way to get around the evidential difficulty is to make their mere presence there after a time an offence. We need a substantial debate along those lines to provide a law that makes it an offence for a person to be present after a certain time at an incident that is unlawful and riotous. That would get over the evidential difficulty of ascertaining who was doing what at a given time. Unless we enact such legislation, we shall merely be playing around with the problem and not getting down to the fundamental point.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary that we must have swift justice. It is essential that these offences should be tried swiftly. There should be an offence of participating in either a major riot or a minor riot and people should accordingly be tried either summarily or in the Crown court. We should provide finance to provide for more summary courts. Most of the money that we spend on law and order goes on Crown courts.

People are increasingly going to the Crown courts because people who go to the magistrates courts are remanded on one day; the magistrates then look at their lists and remand the accused for six or nine months; the lawyers beg the magistrates to set a day to hear the case; in four or five months the case is heard; and the hearing is then postponed for another three months. Magistrates courts cannot deal adequately with defended cases.

These problems are caused because successive Lord Chancellors and Governments have given so little thought to them. They have always looked to the Crown courts for the solution and have said, "We shall appoint more Crown court judges", instead of asking why people have gone to the Crown courts.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): What about the intolerable delays in the Crown courts, which are the fault of prosecution and defence alike?

Mr. Ashby: Of course, there are delays in the Crown courts, but there are problems because many cases could be tried summarily. It is inconvenient to everyone involved—defendant and lawyers—to try a case in a summary court because one cannot say that a case will start on a given day, will take three days and will then be concluded. That is the problem, and I believe that there would be much less use of the Crown courts if there was more summary jurisdiction.

As to drug offences, I am very concerned at the great proliferation of policing authorities. I am convinced that we would be much more efficient in dealing with drug traffickers and drug importers if we did not have such a proliferation of investigating authorities. As I have said several times before, I have never understood why we have the Metropolitan police, other area police forces, Customs and Excise, railway police, transport police and so on. There are dozens of investigating authorities, many of them belonging to Government Departments.

I believe that there is a case for a national police force—for one police force undertaking all investigations, including the investigation of Customs and Excise matters and so on. I can think of nothing more efficient. I can think of numerous examples where different investigative authorities have been in conflict, have failed to agree, have striven for the same objective, but have competed in a way that did not achieve their aims. I have seen that more than once, and that in itself speaks highly for having one co-ordinated force.

During the last few days there was a television programme on "Operation Julie". Today, Mr. Lee, the investigating police officer, spoke most eloquently for a national drugs squad, but it will be hard to have such a squad without a national police force. The more I think of it, the more I fail to understand why we do not have a national drugs squad—*[Interruption.]* I look forward to hearing my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) tell us the very good reasons why we should not. I can think of some reasons for not having such large squads, but the success that could be achieved might outweigh such disadvantages.

I hope that we shall give careful consideration to the evidential side of the problem; we solve absolutely nothing by simply playing around and changing laws.

8.13 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I have only one comment on the speech of the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby). His last point is the only dangerous point that has been made throughout this entire debate. The thing that the country wants least of all is a national police force, and both the police and civilians would, I believe, take that view. I am glad to hear that the Government have not contemplated that at all, even at the height of last year's miners' strike.

The Home Secretary talked of four Bills dealing with animal welfare, drugs, public order and Sunday trading. Most of my comments will be made as spokesman for the Liberal party, but I wish to make one comment about one Bill on behalf of myself. The alliance parties—and I hope the Labour and Conservative parties—will give their members a free vote on the Sunday trading Bill because in large measure it is a matter of conscience.

The Gracious Speech states that

"A Bill will be introduced to remove statutory restrictions on shop opening hours",

but the Government ought to be aware of the grave risks they run by proceeding all the way down that road. I was a member of the outgoing General Synod of the Church of England which voted by about 390 to one to oppose such legislation. For the Church of England, such near unanimity is a rare phenomenon, and is one of the reasons why I hope that the Government will think again about the consequences of removing all statutory restrictions on shop opening hours. From the beginning it was not the case that all seven days were ordained to be the same, say those of us with our particular Christian belief. In any event, the cycle of rest and work requires rest on one. I therefore hope that the Government will take heed of the many warnings that they have received in the debate.

I hope that the animal welfare Bill will not be minimalist. Much needs to be done, particularly after 100 years, and I hope that the Bill will not just contain the minimum that is required. Liberals have argued for years that there should be reform of animal welfare legislation, not least the setting up of a standing commission to report regularly on what is required to keep up with scientific and technological changes. I hope that the Government will consider that.

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

We welcome and will support the drugs Bill. We shall also support—I believe that I speak for all the lawyers in the alliance—the change in the burden of proof. In this case the problem is so large that it is right that the burden of proof should be on the convicted individual to prove that the moneys that he or she possesses have not come from the sale of drugs.

I believe that one of the reasons why the Government and Parliament are now responding is that in the past individuals have, often at danger to themselves, been willing to speak out about the danger of drugs. Last year a group of parents on the Old Kent road in my constituency allowed themselves to be filmed for a programme called "The Skag Kids" produced by London Weekend Television. That was one of the breaks in the conspiracy of silence that have now led to a rapid Government reaction. We look forward to that Bill. Those who for profit exploit the helpless should be dealt with most severely.

The best preface to the public order legislation is a very good article in *The Guardian* on Monday by Hugo Young. He entitled it "The ill-gotten gains from law and disorder". Many of the figures he used are fact and are clearly agreed. He said:

"Since 1979, government spending on the police has increased in real terms by 40 per cent. They are the greatest beneficiaries of the priorities of Thatcherite policies. Police pay, police clothing, police weaponry, police vehicles and police numbers have all received the Home Office's most faithful attention. Police manpower is larger by 10,400 than it was six years ago."

No one disputes that that should have occurred, and there is certainly a case for having many more police than present resources allow. That article continued:

"This is not a trend wholly peculiar to the Eighties. The increase in spending and manpower has been going on for decades. But it has accelerated under the present government, and has been backed by new laws to increase police powers. This has all been done in obeisance to the central belief of Conservatism, as exemplified by Mrs. Thatcher's attitude to unemployment: that crime is not a problem created by social conditions, but a manifestation of human degeneracy, individual or collective, which can best be met by a simple police response.

It is possible that the Tories are right about this. The causes of crime are indeed multiple and mysterious. All one can say is that, after six years of this hugely accelerated spending, the evidence is not persuasive.

For in parallel with the 40 per cent. increase in police resources since 1979 has come, as it happens, a 40 per cent. rise in the rate of reported crime. Crimes of violence are up by nearly 20 per cent., robberies have doubled and burglaries nearly doubled. The trend seems inexorable. Taking 1984, robbery was up by 13 per cent. in the year, burglary by 10 per cent., violence against the person by 6 per cent. (including murder up by 13 per cent.). Overall, serious crime rose by eight per cent. last year.

Despite the massive increase in manpower, the clear-up rate has fallen: in 1974, 40 per cent. of cases were cleared up, in 1984 it was only 35 per cent. This is a deplorable and rather frightening record. Quite palpably the policy has failed."

Then comes the important statement:

"It may not be obvious what other policies would be better. But in other fields the experience of such failure, at such immense cost, would induce a certain humility . . . No such humility is observable in the government. It remains as wedded to the 'police first' strategy as it is to the conviction that unemployment has nothing to do with the problem: two beliefs which are equally distinguished by the shortage of facts to support them."

Until this afternoon I would have accepted that analysis. It was exemplified again by the Prime Minister yesterday. But I welcome what the Home Secretary said today because he did display some humility and, I hope, the promise of some energy. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), I hope that that is a good sign.

The Home Secretary said that there were different causes of crime and the increase in lawlessness and disorder. He talked about the breakdown of family life, communities, unemployment and housing. I hope this means that the Government now believe that social causes must be counted and dealt with. If that change in attitude has taken place with the change in office holder as Home Secretary, I am grateful.

We must consider four elements of the law and order issue. We must consider the individual, and the fact that each individual belongs to a community, lives in a village, a town or a city and is part of the nation. At a national level if the money given to the police to deal with law and order is reduced in real terms we are asking for trouble, particularly in a time such as this. That is the reality. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) was correct to say that expenditure in real terms on such problems has been reduced under this Government. It is about time that that was changed. Increasing resources will not provide a solution when, in real terms, the amount spent on law and order relative to the whole of the Government's budget has been reduced.

Sir Eldon Griffiths I am something of a shop steward in these matters and while I always want to obtain more for the police—I make no apology for that—the hon. Gentleman must get his facts right. When this Government came to office expenditure on law and order services was about £2·25 billion. Today it is about £4 billion. There has been an increase in real terms in expenditure on law and order services.

Mr. Hughes: If one examines public expenditure and compares the proportion that was spent on law and order in 1979 to the proportion spent today, one can see that this expenditure has been reduced, whereas expenditure on other services has been increased. That is in spite of increases in police pay and improved conditions.

At a personal level, individuals, too, are to blame for our problems. There will always be sin and individual crime. A disquieting opinion poll just published shows that more and more individuals believe dishonesty of various types to be acceptable. That is a worrying trend.

Yesterday my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) talked about the problems in the urban areas, although not there alone. One of our problems might be explained by the fact that the Government are not well represented in the inner cities. Let us examine the larger cities, taking inner London as the core here, and thinking of Birmingham, Glasgow, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, Edinburgh and Manchester. Only in Edinburgh do the Government hold a majority of parliamentary seats. A breakdown of parliamentary representation in our largest cities reveals 55 Opposition Members to 25 Government Members. This results in a lack of comprehension by Government Members and may explain the lack of importance attached to the noises from the inner cities of disquiet and dissatisfaction. I am talking not about the rioters alone, but about the old and those who are vulnerable in the places where being vulnerable is most dangerous.

If one cannot be heard one shouts. That is a practice followed by children and often by young people who have

been let down by their families—as the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West said—and who have not been listened to, loved or cared for. Communities often feel that they have not been heard as well. I endorse entirely what the former Prime Minister and Home Secretary, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), said when he stated clearly that all communities are entitled to the same standards of commitment in law and order terms.

One of the tragedies of the recent unscheduled reorganisation of the Metropolitan police, about which all political parties and many London Members protested, is that the new division into eight areas makes it appear that the voice of the inner city communities with the biggest problems will be heard less clearly.

I do not need to remind anyone that it is often in the inner cities and urban areas that the problems of crime and clear-up rates are greatest. Unemployment and a lack of vacancies are greatest in the same areas. I checked the clear-up figures for the Southwark area last year. Mercifully the figure for offences against the person was almost the best, although under 50 per cent. The only other clear-up rate of more than 50 per cent. was for fraud or forgery. The clear-up rate for criminal damage was 13 per cent. and for theft or the handling of stolen goods, 16 per cent.; for thefts in the street it was 6 per cent. and for pickpocketing 9 per cent. For other offences such as burglary, other thefts and offences against property the figures are low. We are not winning the battle against crime.

The Liberal party has always been strong on law and strong on justice. Both the alliance parties have asserted throughout their conjoined existence that they believe that we need strong law for order—but with strong justice at the same time. That may make us different from other parties, but it means that we do not give total, uncritical support to everything that the police do. Eighty per cent. or more of the police are very good, but some make mistakes and overstep the mark. Sometimes Labour Members complain and protest about the police, but they refuse to meet or speak to police representatives. This is a totally unhelpful attitude to dialogue and working with those who operate at the front line, although I accept that such an attitude was not struck today in our debate. We do not want to escalate either the language or the activities of violence and confrontation. However, we equally do not want the silence of standing by when disorder occurs, particularly if the people standing by are leaders in their communities.

The media must take their share of the blame. Violence on television and its glorification does not help. The advancing of the acquisitive society through advertising which pretends that the quantity of consumer goods rather than the quality of life is most important leads youngsters with vulnerable minds to do things that they might not otherwise do.

We hope that the public order Bill, on which we cannot comment in detail as it has not been published, will put some matters right. Of course, there should be notice of most marches because that is reasonable and acceptable. When people plan to gather together to exercise their right to assemble, it is right that that should be managed in an orderly manner. It is right that there should be prevention of disruption and coercion. It is also right that individual marches should not be banned.

I hope that we hear more of what the Government have signalled, but not mentioned today—of the need to deal with the racialist problems that are increasing in our inner cities. We must ensure that the law is equally tough on those who incite racial violence and hatred and prepare literature in language that inflames an already delicate situation. When I intervened in the Home Secretary's speech, I warned that offences related to disorderly conduct should not be drafted in such a way that they would be open to enormous discretion and become horrendously difficult to enforce.

I wish to pay tribute to the fire service, as no one has yet done so in this debate. It often has as difficult a job as the police, but is less frequently congratulated. The fire service is often ignored in public plaudits, yet without it our communities would be far less safe.

I wish finally to deal with crime and punishment. It is not true that it is only in the inner cities that criminality and disorder have increased. I have researched four police authority areas — the Metropolitan police, the west midlands, Cumbria and the rural area of Dyfed and Powys. The increase in offences per 100,000 population during the past five years—and this is not a party political point—has been 30 per cent. in the Metropolitan police area, 55 per cent. in the west midlands, 27 per cent. in Cumbria and 32 per cent. in rural Dyfed and Powys. That must mean that we must look widely at the structures that we organise to deal with problems in our society.

I hope that the Government realise that structures of government must be altered. For example, in London there is no provision for community or parish councils. It is vital that London has them and that people organise the management of their own communities.

It is vital that there is a reorganisation of the structures of police in certain areas, and that we do not follow the road which, I regret, the Metropolitan police commissioner is taking — without prior consultation. However desirable the commissioner feels it may be to have larger rather than smaller police areas, that can create dangers. Therefore, I hope that the commissioner will modify his proposed changes.

I hope that we shall no longer experience the dialogue of the deaf on our police consultative committees. The Home Office introduced guidelines under previous legislation, and then brought forward the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. Having negotiated some committee structures with local authorities, the rules were changed. I hope that the police and councils, for example in Southwark, will none the less agree a formula. There are lessons to be learned on both sides. The police must accept that sometimes an enormous, purely consultative body is far from ideal for dialogue; councils must accept that a small political body seeking to control the police is also not acceptable.

We need improvement in police personnel, manpower and training. The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) referred to this point—to officers who could hardly type spending a great deal of time typing charge sheets in the middle of the night. That is not what we pay them to do, and I hope that that practice will end. I have witnessed that practice recently, and it is a great waste of resources intended for other things.

We need to ensure that there is not discrimination in behaviour. It is surprising that the lead article in this week's edition of *The Listener* describes how people with no convictions have found that, on occasion, the police

[Mr. Hughes]

have gone over the top. I have sent the Home Secretary a complaint from one of my constituents about police over-reaction in Tower Hamlets. It is clear that the stop and search powers have, on occasion, been abused.

Today's article in *The London Standard* suggests that the courts may also discriminate in their sentences on racial grounds. If that is true, I hope that the Home Office will take seriously that evidence, which has been submitted to the Commission for Racial Equality, and ensure that our courts uphold the principle, by which we all stand, of non-discrimination between races.

When we deal with firearms offences and increased penalties, I hope that we shall also consider whether it is now appropriate to ensure that when police are issued with firearms they seek permission for a warrant from a magistrate, as they must in certain cases when they seek permission to search or seize. That may provide some of the controls lacking until now.

We need a society in which the strengths of our resources, our communities and our people are put to work together. That will give hope to our inner cities. The Home Secretary indicated that the Government were beginning to respond to the problems. They need to move quickly if the cycle of despair and disadvantage is not to continue to produce a further cycle of crime and violence. As a society, that is something that we can ill afford.

8.35 pm

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): I shall not take up all the arguments and quotations of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) other than to disagree with his statistic that only 80 per cent. of our police are good and 20 per cent. bad. If that is the opinion of the Liberal party, it will not advance our debate or help to solve the problems.

I welcome most of the Home Office legislation outlined in the Gracious Speech, although I have reservations about Sunday trading. I very much welcome the tough action that we will take against the evil drug traffickers.

I pay tribute to the Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), who has endured a great deal during the past year in bringing forward proposals to reform the law on animal experiments. I hope that both sides of the House will feel that there should be a degree of unanimity on that matter. We must back my hon. Friend, because during the next nine months we will all suffer a great deal of hostile mail from those whose belief in the need for such experiments is not as admirable as it should be.

I heed the exhortations of the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), who said that law and order should not become a two-party political matter. He said that the Labour party believed in law and order and that Conservative Back Benchers should not claim that they formed the only party that believed in law and order.

If we are to heed the right hon. Gentleman's exhortations, Conservative Members want certain conditions to be met. We accept that the majority of Labour party members are as keen on law and order as any Conservative party member. I meet ordinary Labour party members in my constituency, in business affairs and when many of them spend money in the Conservative club. Unfortunately, they are the unsung majority of the old-fashioned Labour party, about which we do not hear a great deal these days. They have no time for some of the modern trendies who now speak for the Labour party.

I regret that many Labour Members who have spoken today have claimed that it is only since 1979 that there has been an increase in crime and an increase in unemployment, and have drawn the conclusion that the crime rate that we suffer today began when the Government took office and that its causes are solely related to unemployment.

If Opposition Members seek to pursue that argument, we will not achieve all-party unanimity on how to tackle the problems of crime. Indeed, Opposition Members will not be believed in the country. They claim that unemployment is one of the major causes of crime, but that is not proved by history. Although there was record unemployment in the 1930s, that did not result in the rising crime rate that we suffer today. If the argument of Opposition Members is true, surely there would have been a greater crime rate in the 1930s. Not simply in the inner cities but in areas such as Surrey and Sussex, where there is low unemployment, we still find the same levels of crime. In other words, Opposition Members should not try to make too strong a correlation between unemployment and crime.

While I accept that the majority of ordinary Labour supporters are appalled by the rising crime rates, I hope that they will not allow within their ranks to speak as Labour party candidates those who are not simply critical of the police, as the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) suggested, but those who undermine the credibility of the police at every stage. It is no secret that I refer to Mr. Bernie Grant. Indeed, after the next election we could find sitting on the Opposition Benches a Labour Member who gloated at the fact that the police "got a bloody good hiding."

Unless such people are rooted out of the party, my hon. Friends and I will be bound to say that the Labour party is not the party of law and order, and the public will see it to be true. For the hon. Member for Bootle to claim that having someone like Bernie Grant in the party is somehow good for democracy is turning reality on its head.

Much has been said today about the causes of crime, and, as I said, many Opposition Members have short memories, believing that most of the causes date back only to 1979. I have a much longer memory. A major starting point for the criminal activity today was the 1960s, when the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) said that a permissive society was a civilised society. At that trendy time the rot set in and we began to hear about the opt-out society.

I went up to university in the early 1970s. We found then that we had so many liberties, without concomitant duties and responsibilities being imposed on us, that we began to feel that authority no longer mattered. In those days, in the 1960s and early 1970s, parents began to take the view that if their children were caned at school the school was to blame, and they were prepared to back the children against the teachers. This House did not help in many ways because we undermined the authority of teachers in schools. That was a small part of it.

Local authorities throughout the country were undermining the authority of the police in every way. When, in one part of the country, children who scrawl graffiti on a wall find that the local authority backs them

rather than the teachers, it is no wonder that other youngsters adopt the attitude that if those kids can get away with it, it must be right.

In the 1960s and early 1970s we began to change our attitude about what was right and wrong, and too many of us started to make excuses. The Church began to lose some of its authority. Indeed, it began to fudge what was morally right and wrong.

We recall a deplorable example in this House some time ago when the leader of the SDP tried to speak from the Opposition Dispatch Box. We recall what was done to prevent him from reaching the Box. Whether or not he was right to attempt to speak from the Opposition Dispatch Box, the assault on his person and the activity that went on about him from a small minority of Labour Members received extensive newspaper coverage. If Members of Parliament give the impression that law and order and conventions of what is right and wrong in the Chamber are disregarded, it is no wonder that the green light is given for the breakdown of civilised conventions in the rest of society.

The media must bear some responsibility, although I do not put all the blame in that quarter. I enjoy that marvellous television programme, "Minder," though perhaps it is dangerous to comment on a television programme; I may be misreported as having said that the root of all our evils lies in "Minder". However, in that one instance — in what I acknowledge to be a good programme—we glorify in some ways the con man or the person who puts one over on the police.

Many programmes and films could be seen on our screens in the 1960s and early 1970s when the baddies won in the end. It became fashionable in, say, westerns for the goodies not to win. That put in motion something of the attitude that criminality paid and that wrong was sometimes better than right.

What action we should now take to combat crime is a more difficult matter to determine. I welcome the Home Secretary's assurance that, where there is a declared need, we shall find the resources and more police to meet that need. I hope that, if the chief constable of Cumbria makes a case, we shall be successful in proving it, and I should like to see more policemen on the beat in Cumbria and elsewhere.

I hope that when the powers of the police are increased in the Bill that is to be introduced, we shall have learned some lessons from the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. I voted for most of that measure because I found it acceptable, but certain aspects of it were faulty. We started from the premise that most of the measure was concerned with the inner cities and London. Britain does not consist only of those areas. Too much of that legislation was designed to placate minority interests in London in relation to the abuse of police powers. That resulted in the police being surrounded with a massive bureaucracy in that measure, and that was unnecessary.

It was ironic to hear the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) talking today about the danger of creating too much bureaucracy. At every stage of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, when my hon. Friends and I said, "We can trust the police. We need not foist all these forms on them", Opposition Members insisted on them filling in forms at every stage, even, for example, when stopping and searching people. The police were obliged to fill in the equivalent of an HORT 1 form every time they suspected somebody on the street. Opposition Members insisted that we surround the police with rigmarole and bureaucracy. Their pockets were bulging with books, papers and forms. Let us start from the premise that we can trust the police and need not shroud them in more bureaucracy simply because we are giving them additional powers.

I welcome the Home Secretary's desire to put more resources into crime prevention, a sphere that has been an unsung hero in recent years. I hope that the Home Office will issue guidance, for example, to the building industry on the standards required for locks and windows. One can walk into almost any new home built in Britain and find that the main locks on the front door are of a lesser standard then are the small locks that hon. Members have on their lockers in the Library corridor. Alternatively, if doors have decent locks, they are often made of flimsy pine and plain glass.

Simple guidelines to the building industry would result in homes having sturdier doors, and locks with more than two or three levers. I recently spent a considerable time fitting window latches and locks to new windows. They had not been made with such simple devices. No wonder so many con men can be found in the shadier fringes of the security industry selling unnecessary alarm systems to householders, when all they need are good locks.

I do not like the House to create unnecessary legislation. However, when we had a major problem over health and safety at work and felt that we were far below acceptable standards, we passed the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 containing a system of improvement and prohibition notices. I suggest that the principle of those notices could be adopted in crime prevention. Many police officers become extremely frustrated when they go to domestic or industrial properties and find appalling standards, yet have no power to take action. They can make recommendations, but they can be ignored. The insurance can be a more active force in getting action taken. We could have a system similar to improvement notices which the police could serve on industries, employers and householders whose buildings fall below an acceptable crime prevention standard to such an extent that they invite crime. It might be one way out of our present problem.

We shall no doubt have a great deal of activity in the House during the next nine months as we debate the various proposed measures. I have a great deal of sympathy for the Home Office work load. If we are to address ourselves to the crime problem, I see no alternative but for everyone to acknowledge that its causes lie beyond the inner-city areas, poverty or unemployment. They lie with our fundamental attitude to law and order, the conventions and the civilised society as we have known it during the past few years.

8.50 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Some Conservative Members implied that Labour Members do not have a good relationship with the police forces. The relationship that Labour Members of Parliament have with the police in Strathclyde is second to none. I served on a local authority, and we had an excellent relationship with Sir David McNee and Sir Patrick Hamill and no doubt will have with Mr. Sloan.

After I leave my surgery on a Saturday morning, I am met by a community police man who asks me whether there have been any complaints that he can help with. I do

[Mr. Michael J. Martin]

not receive anti-police complaints on many occasions. I receive complaints that there are not enough policemen on the beat and in the community. Labour Members of Parliament do not have the attitude claimed by Conservative Members.

I live in my community. If young people do not have a job, they will hang about street corners and the entrances and corridors of multi-storey flats long after midnight. They have nothing to do. The type of crime that they commit is vandalism, which causes a great deal of distress.

I am glad that the Secretary of State for Scotland is present. Springburn has an unemployment problem and now we have the threatened redundancies at British Rail Engineering Ltd. The right hon. Gentleman has a responsibility to study communities such as mine and do something about unemployment. He cannot get away with saying that he is a member of the party that wishes to ensure that we have law and order in our communities and then do nothing about the only major employer we have left. When the local authority asked, on behalf of the BREL work force, for permission to put a group of consultants into the engineering work shops to discover whether they were viable, they were turned away by BREL in Derby. I hope that the Secretary of State will make representations to BREL in Derby to allow the local authority to do the job that he is not prepared to do

My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) mentioned a point which I believe is worth talking about. We do not pay sufficient attention to the fact that the homes thrown up in the 1960s and 1970s by local authorities with the encouragement of central Government — corridor-type housing and multi-storey flats—need security different from that required by the semi-detached and four-in-a-block houses with gardens on the older local authority estates. People who live in houses with gardens can take some security precautions. That is not so easy in a multi-storey flat. There are 22-storey flats in Balgray Hill and anyone can walk in there at any time. People can go into the lifts and vandalise them. Week after week, my constituents have to walk to the top floor because of lift breakdowns.

The hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) spoke about locks. He said that some doors do not have good locks. I should like to take him to some of the multi-storey flats in my constituency. At least one tenant has put in a double security door. That tenant is a drug-pusher. People are being pestered at four o'clock in the morning by drug addicts who go to the wrong door looking for drugs. I have been told by the local housing manager that unless that person is charged by the police there is nothing that the local authority can do.

The Secretary of State introduced tenants' rights legislation. He should come to the multi-storey flats in Springburn and do something to protect the rights of people in that community because they are living in deplorable conditions. The irony is that people often say that the multi-storey flats are terrible places in which to live, but the people who live in those flats came from streets in Springburn which were due to be demolished. They had lived beside one another for many years, and their fathers and mothers before them, and they all moved into those multi-storey flats. They were excellent places to live in, and those people still want to live there, but they do not want to put up with the deplorable conditions that exist at the moment because of the drugs problem. The Government must do something about that. It is not good enough to say that we will send in the police. Those of us who watched "Operation Julie" know that when we are fighting the drug menace it sometimes takes many years to track down those people and arrest them. It is unreasonable for council tenants to have to live in such conditions.

Security has been mentioned. I go to privately owned flats in London where there are porters on the premises 24 hours a day. No one can get by the main door. In my constituency there are 22 and 32-storey flats — the biggest multi-storey flats in Europe — and anyone can walk in.

The Secretary of State will tell us that there is no money, but there is money available for urban aid projects, and some of them are crazy projects.

I have asked questions on the Floor of the House about some organisations which, over three years, have picked up about £300,000 and put on a puppet show in the main street. They have even misplaced some of the funds, and have not paid taxes and national insurance contributions. No one in the community can remember saying that they were wanted. They came on a recommendation from people in community education and social work, who are building an empire in areas such as mine. Yet, in spite of the youth training scheme and urban aid, we are unable to put people on the doors of premises to enable residents to live in peace and quiet. It is nonsensical that money is being wasted when we cannot do the very things that people want us to do.

When we have serious problems such as vandalism and drug addiction, I wish that the experts, both local authority and national, would ask the people what they want. I wish that they would say, "If there is money to spare, what do you want it spent on?" I repeat that in the past two or three years £300,000 has been spent in my community, with nothing to show for it, yet in parts of the area people have been campaigning for 16 years for a community hall. They are asking only for four walls, a door and a few windows. They will run the hall, provided that the local authority, the Government, urban aid or MSC will build it, but they cannot get it. Yet there are advertisements in the newspapers for community workers and for various types of people that we have never heard of and do not need. It is time that the Secretary of State and other Ministers and officials started to ask the people in the community what they want. If people were given what they need for their protection, the crime figures would come down. It is nonsense that young people should have to sit around seven days a week because we are not prepared to build them a small swimming pool or sports facility. That is madness. It causes many problems, and will do so in the future.

I heard the Prime Minister say on the radio that she will give more resources to the police to deal with riots. She also said that she will give more resources to the Customs service. I hope that she does so. Then we shall not have people wanting to leave housing estates because of the drug pushers. But are the National Health Service and other services to be deprived because extra resources are put into other Departments? While I welcome the provision of those extra resources, I do not want them to be at the expense of the Health Service.

Drug addiction is causing serious strains on local health services. There is not one hospital in Scotland that

specialises in the care and rehabilitation of drug addicts. Drug addicts are being admitted to general hospitals because of the abuse they are giving their bodies, and doctors and nurses are not trained to care for them. I have not been able to check the report, but I have been told that one drug addict in a general ward in Stobhill hospital in my constituency is costing £1,000 a week for antibiotics needed for the treatment of problems caused by his addiction. It would be deplorable if money were to be taken from the NHS to pay for extra Customs officers. If extra resources are to be provided, it should not be at the expense of the Health Service.

9.4 pm

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I hope that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) will forgive me if I do not follow the thread of his argument or respond to it, because time is now very short.

I should like to remind the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) that the police in Britain maintain the Queen's peace by consent. We maintain it by respect for the police and by respect for the rule of law. Once that respect and consent goes, it follows that the maintenance of the Queen's peace breaks down. I listened to the right hon. Member for Gorton with amazement. I was astonished by the bare effrontery of his statement that the Labour party supports the police and that the rising crime wave is due to Thatcher's Britain. The Labour party, Her Majesty's loyal Opposition, is anti-police. Its record in that respect is appalling at both national and local levels. In recent months no opportunity has been lost by leading Labour politicians to undermine the police.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Look at the record.

Mr. Hickmet: Yes, I shall do so. Labour politicians have taken every opportunity open to them to attack, criticise and therefore undermine the rule of law.

During the miners' strike, we witnessed appalling scenes of violence. There were 10,000 pickets at Orgreave and we all remember the violence that took place. During that period Labour politicians took the opportunity day after day to criticise the police in the House. The police were criticised from the Opposition Front Bench and by Labour Back Benchers. What example is that for leading politicians to set the people?

The Labour party endorsed Scargill's claim that the police were an army of occupation and that we lived in a police state. They supported his contention that the police were beating up miners' wives and tapping miners' telephones. The type of violence that we saw during the miners' dispute is condoned and excused by Labour politicians. What effect does that have on the rule of law, respect for the police and maintenance of the Queen's peace? The Labour party has much to answer for.

I remind the right hon. Member for Gorton that at the Labour party conference delegates described the Metropolitan police as an enemy and were cheered by Labour Members. For almost one year during 1981 the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) mounted a campaign that the police were responsible for the deaths of several men who had been taken into police custody. In a letter dated 9 May 1984 I asked the Leader of the Opposition whether he agreed with Mr. Arthur Scargill that there was only one law in industrial relations and industrial disputes, which was that picket lines were not to be crossed. I have received no reply to my letter to date.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) is an Opposition spokesman on employment. A few days ago he wrote in a journal:

> "In local authority situations, do you obey the law or not obey the law? We don't have any kind of firm principles in the party of how we might deal with this problem."

The Opposition have voted three times against the renewal of the prevention of terrorism legislation. Throughout the country, police committees under Labour control hamstring the police. They attack them for attempting to carry out certain police functions. In the past week we have witnessed the antics of the Labour-controlled Manchester police committee in its relations with the chief constable and his efforts to police that city properly.

I remind Labour Members that the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) has been forced to give up his post as an Opposition Front Bench spokesman on home affairs because of, to use his words,

> "the intimidation, chicanery, lying and cheating by Militant Tendency supporters."

It is necessary only to be a member of a local authority which is under Labour control or Militant Tendency control to understand the sort of attack that one can come under for opposing the controlling party's policies.

The violence—*[Interruption.]* The most unpleasant Member in the House, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, has entered the Chamber to barrack as usual. He is about five minutes late.

At the next general election, the Labour party candidate for the Tottenham seat will be Mr. Bernie Grant. He is a Labour candidate who said about the riots in Tottenham that the youth took on the police and

> "gave them a bloody good hiding."

Labour Members, including the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, should know that if they wish to maintain law and order, they, like all other politicians, must set a good example. It will not do if Labour politicians choose every opportunity to attack the police. It is little wonder that, following the scenes of the past 12 months, some of those tactics have been imported into the inner cities.

9.10 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I have listened to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) making an unpleasant, inaccurate and irrelevant speech. I shall say nothing more about it.

In the past few days, there has been a remarkable manipulation, almost an orchestration, of the newspapers, which have been persuaded on flimsy evidence that we are about to see a war on crime, a tough relentless campaign spearheaded by the Prime Minister herself. That is puzzling because of the extraordinary gap between the rhetoric on the front pages and the substance of the proposals in the Queen's Speech. That has a great deal to do with the Government's cynical judgment about poll ratings and their discretionary tactics to try to divert attention from what has really been happening. This is a damaging and disreputable exercise, which is made the more unpleasant by being complied with by the rather sanctimonious pretence that only on the Government Benches is there any genuine concern about law and order.

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said, that assertion is nothing more than pretence. We are committed to effective policing. We want tough but fair sentencing in the courts, and an adequate level of protection for every citizen. The Solicitor-General for Scotland looks astonished, but that is because he must be blinded by his own prejudices and assumptions. I have made a fair statement of the point of view consistently put forward in Scottish debates and, I believe, in United Kingdom debates in the past year or two.

Law and order should never be reduced to what is effectively a campaign gimmick and there should not be the public parade of concern that comes at times, when they are at their worst, from certain Conservative Members. Such a parade of concern is no more than a way of hiding the truth and deceiving the electorate about what is happening.

accept that there is every reason for giving an emphasis to law and order, because the unpalatable and stark facts are in the Scottish figures. I listened to what the Home Secretary said, and I accept that the numbers game has its dangers and that there are many complexities but, at the end of the day, we have the recorded crime figures, which are spectacular in Scotland.

Between 1978 and 1984, as my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) said, the number of crimes recorded went up from 334,000 to 474,000, and up again in the first quarter of 1985—an overall increase of 41·8 per cent. There were 112,000 recorded instances of housebreaking over the same period —an increase of over 48 per cent.

That should be a cause for concern and we are entitled, and have a duty, to draw attention to those figures if only because we remember the ruthless way in which the same standard was applied by Conservative politicians in the past and the ferocity of the attack, based on such figures, launched again and again on previous Labour Governments.

There has been an enormous growth in crime figures. We have all seen it and we are all concerned about it. However, I object because an attempt is being made to suggest that the Conservatives have a uniquely impressive record on fighting crime.

Let us take another statistic, on which we must correct an impression that has been falsely given, that of police and police manpower. In 1979, the number of policemen in post was 13,214. In September 1985, after six years of dedication to improving policing in this country, the number of policemen in post was 13,273, an increase of 59. In 1978 alone—it is not without significance in the context of this debate and the charges which have been bandied about the House that this was the last year of a Labour Government—the number of policemen in post increased by 800. That figure has to be compared with an increase of 59 after six years of a Conservative Government. If one looks at the establishment, one sees that between 1979 and 1984 the increase in establishment was well under 1 per cent. There is no sign of anything, in practice, which reflects the heated rhetoric on law and order from Conservative politicians in Scotland.

If one compares the number of police officers per 1,000 of population in 1980 and 1984, one finds that in 1984 it was marginally down, from 2·58 to 2·56. That information is contained in a written answer to a parliamentary question on 8 June 1984 which I found when preparing for this debate. There is no justification, therefore, for the sometimes irresponsible claims that are made by Conservative politicians.

The third criterion is the increase in the number of offences. The picture is depressing. There is, for instance, no more traumatic experience for the householder than housebreaking, This is not a middle-class disease. It is prevalent in the area that I represent. In 1979, 20 per cent. of all the housebreaking cases that were reported were cleared up. That percentage has dropped marginally, but significantly, to 18 per cent. Furthermore, in 1973 the percentage of cases cleared up was not 18 or 20 per cent. but 27 per cent. Therefore, I am entitled to say, when asking people to judge the claims made about law and order by politicians, that the growth in crime is depressing and frightening. As for the Government's record concerning police cover on the ground, it is unimaginative and poor. Under this Government there has been a deterioration in the clear-up rate. This must be a legitimate cause for anxiety among the electorate.

When one looks at the solutions that are offered in the Gracious Speech, one feels dispirited and depressed. Almost no solution is offered for Scotland. A trickle of odds and ends has been gathered up by a conscientious civil servant who did not like a void and felt that he had to produce something under the heading "Scotland". It is a collection of bric-á-brac and debris. It will contribute almost nothing. It is not so much an anti-climax as a non-event. In no way will it measure up to the kind of statistics to which we have referred.

The few measures which have dominated today's debate are geared almost entirely to England and Wales. May I ask the Secretary of State to say a few words about the Public Order Act 1936 and clarify the position in Scotland. If the refugee now in Wales — the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) — had read with attention the Committee stage debates on the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 he would know that in part V we legislated for the notification and control of processions. To that extent the Secretary of State is entitled to say that for Scotland no further action needs to be taken. However, he will remember that during the debates on the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 there was a great deal of discussion about the future of section 3 of the Public Order Act 1936 which still applies to Scotland. This leaves Scotland in a slightly uncomfortable position.

In my view, the Civic Government (Scotland) Act was right to put the main onus upon the local authority to make a judgment on the course to be adopted, after advice from the chief constable. The local authority is the initiating body and the ultimate decision lies with it. However, rather uneasily but in parallel with it is section 3 of the Public Order Act 1936 under which the initiating authority is the chief constable. In Committee I argued that section 3 of the 1936 Act should be withdrawn from Scotland and that we should depend on the new machinery of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, which seemed to be adequate. The Solicitor-General for Scotland replied that that could not be done because consultations and discussions were going on about public order legislation relating to Scotland. Perhaps the Secretary of State could say whether he will look more sympathetically at the point.

I wish to clarify a point about drugs. My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) joined me in harrying—a fair description—the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay), and the Solicitor-General for Scotland in Committee on this year's Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill. Mysteriously, we were given a confused concept of a fine to be added once the courts had decided what the offence was worth under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. On top of a sentence of six or seven years, there would be a substantial penalty which would almost certainly amount to a further term of imprisonment. There is much confusion among Ministers about the criteria that would be used by the courts. How do we interpret the phrase in the miscellaneous provisions Act

"profits likely to have been made from the charge"?

The Secretary of State knows that we considered the possibility of forfeiture as a simplification and a way out of the morass. We were told that nothing could be done because forfeiture was being considered by the Scottish Law Commission. That may still be the position. I suspect that legislation on forfeiture in England and Wales will result in a much tidier and more logical solution, compared with the morass in which Ministers found themselves when they tried to explain the criteria for the fine to be applied under the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act. We should consider again forfeiture in Scottish terms. Perhaps the Secretary of State will say a few words on that matter.

My final point refers to proposed Scottish legislation that was included in the Gracious Speech—the new legal aid Bill.

Mr. Raffan: I thank the hon. Member for giving way. I did not realise that he was moving on from the drugs issue. If he had listened to my speech, the hon. Member would realise that I did not say anything about the public order measures. I asked for a clarification of the Labour party's position on the burden of proof, which lies at the heart of the proposed legislation on drugs.

Mr. Dewar: I owe the hon. Member an apology. I transposed him. The hon. Member referred to the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act and not the Civic Government (Scotland) Act. I am sure that the hon. Member has fast reading skills from his days with the *Daily Express* and an ability to simplify complicated issues. If he reads the report of the Committee stage, he will find the answer to his query.

I am prepared to concede that the legal aid Bill is an important piece of legislation. My colleagues and I do not object to an independent body to administer legal aid in Scotland. The Law Society has done a good job, but there is a possibility, even if it is not a reality, of a clash of interests. I believe that no one would object to that reform as long as the new body is genuinely independent. We would not wish it to become a victim of Treasury cheese-paring, because a threat to the right to representation could arise. We will have to consider the small print of the Bill. The main tests will be whether it infringes the right to representation, whether there is a danger of a proper defence being inhibited and whether a defendant will be able to put his case before the court. If there were any doubts on those tests, we should oppose the measure strongly. I give Ministers the benefit of the doubt—perhaps credit is a better word—because I do not believe that we will have a problem agreeing on that issue.

However, some of the speeches made by the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram), and some of the suggestions in the consultative document have left traces of doubt in our mind. For example, it was suggested that one criterion that might properly be considered in criminal legal aid was whether legal aid had been granted in the past and whether the defendant had previous convictions. I do not say that that was a positive proposal, but it should never even have been suggested.

It was suggested that we should ask the legal aid committee to put itself in the improper position of not only anticipating the verdict, but deciding the likely sentence and then making a value judgement about whether it was likely to be serious enough to justify the expenditure of public funds on a defence. That was a serious suggestion in the consultative document and I hope that it has died a death. The confusion was compounded by the Under-Secretary, who referred in a Scottish Grand Committee to legal aid as a social service. He said:

"Its benefits have to be considered in relation to its cost. Like others, it is demand led. I think again that there would be general agreement that that does not mean that the demands should be met indiscriminately." — [*Official Report, Scottish Grand Committee*, 2 July 1985; c. 124]

The hon. Gentleman went on to talk about the need to define the interests of justice and to define in legislative terms "reasonableness" and a number of other words such as "moderate". If we are to get into that ball game, we shall want to look very carefully at the Government's formulation. We say simply that we should not impose a cash limit on justice. We must never prejudice a proper defence.

Over the past year or two, there has been a tendency towards gimmickry in the Government's general attitude. A number of attempts have been made to be seen to be doing something. It is uncharacteristic of the Secretary of State, but there has been a tendency to look for a macho image in law and order. For example, "breach of the peace" was suddenly rechristened "vandalism" and we were all expected to sleep safer in our beds. Young offenders were to receive the short, sharp shock treatment. We told Ministers that that was liable to the law of diminishing returns and they have had to change the system to make sure that people are not put through the machine two or three times, with bad results for the machine.

I say to the Secretary of State, in passing, that we shall be looking closely at the way in which the Chiswick report on the Glenocnil centre is implemented and that we are still not reconciled to his claim that there is no need for a wider look at the operation of detention centres.

I have considerable sympathy—which is probably wise of me—for Ministers who have to wrestle with the problem of rising crime. I am the first to say that there are no simple solutions, but at least I hope that most of us would try to avoid simplistic claims that simple solutions have been found and are about to transform the situation.

I know that people such as the Solicitor-General for Scotland who occasionally lapse into moderation and reasonableness are at their most vulnerable at Tory party conferences, but at the Perth conference in 1982 the hon. and learned Gentleman was boasting—that is the right word—that the housebreaker who had committed an

[Mr. Dewar]

offence on bail would be charged not only with housebreaking, but with an offence under the Bail Act. He said that that

"could have dramatic effects, particularly in reducing the most disturbing housebreaking figures."

What has happened to those disturbing figures? They have gone up substantially and we have not seen the dramatic impact that was cheerfully promised to eager journalists from *The Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald*.

There will always be arguments about cause and effect in this area, and I accept that it is not easy to see one's way through. I have a great deal of sympathy with what the Home Secretary said about that.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton will not object when I say that he was a little hard on the Home Secretary whom he accused of being a pale carbon copy of the Prime Minister. I believe that there is a sharp distinction between the Prime Minister's position and that adopted by the Home Secretary today. He was sheepish, defensive, ill at ease and almost honourably embarrassed about the task that he was facing and the record that he was having to defend. I see none of those human qualities in the Prime Minister.

No one takes satisfaction from rising crime figures, inner city tensions, alienation or disaffection in our society. No one would pretend that there is a simple correlation between social deprivation, unemployment and the crime rate. That has been said again and again during this debate. The Home Secretary came close to saying this afternoon that, although he would place a different emphasis on the causal effects that he could enumerate, he did not deny that the cause that we were discussing could be taken into account and ought to be considered. I welcome that, because there is a danger in Parliament—Opposition Members are as guilty as others in this respect—of seeing the dawn of history in 1979 and excising from memory everything that happened before, scrapping it as certainly as the Tories have scrapped their earlier "Labour isn't working" speeches on the unemployment issue.

Prior to 1979, there were Tories who were prepared to say that there was a correlation or at least a connection between unemployment and the crime rate. My right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton quoted Lord Whitelaw on that issue. I therefore object to being lectured by the Prime Minister and told that any such suggestion is in bad taste. I also object to the Solicitor-General for Scotland in the Scottish Grand Committee referring to such a proposition as a grotesque slur and the Secretary of State for Scotland describing it as

"a slander on the unemployed."—[*Official Report, Scottish Grand Committee*, 24 May 1982; c. 3.]

It is not a slander. The Opposition are not saying that unemployment is a form of moral depravity. We are saying that it is a misfortune, partially resulting from Government policy, which increases pressures, creates a sense of hopelessness and alienation, puts people at risk in our cities and therefore has an impact on the crime rate.

Testimony from direct experience has been given by my hon. Friends the Members for Greenock and Port Glasgow, for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) and for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin). If one goes into our areas and talks and lives with the people, one can see exactly where that connection exists. In Scotland there are 350,000 people in the dole queues, more than 140,000 of them 25 years of age or under. Thousands of Scots have never had a job since leaving school and are drawing benefit. It is ludicrous to say that that is irrelevant or that it is bad taste and an insult to raise the issue. I concede that it would be wrong to say that that was the only cause of crime, but the absolutism that suggests that it has no relevance takes my breath away. We ought to reject that idea comprehensively during the course of this and every debate on the issue.

The pressures are there and, although I would be the first to accept that we cannot have an exclusive spotlight on that issue, we must have a comprehensive look at how the courts operate. We must ensure that there are adequate powers both for the judiciary and for the police and that we do not erode civil liberties, but we must have the necessary, proper and balanced weapons to proceed with the fight against crime. The Opposition accept that and we ask the Government to accept it also. The Government must also recognise that, if we are to get at the root causes of the problem, the Government must have a change of heart and recognise the damage that their general policies are doing to the people.

I seek a touch of humility from the Government and I perceived a sense of that in the Home Secretary's speech today—a touch of humility and realism which has been sadly lacking all too often in the past and is certainly lacking in the apology for a programme in the Queen's Speech which in no sense measures up to the needs of the nation.

9.34 pm

* **The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. George Younger):** We are all grateful to the Opposition for suggesting that it was a good idea to spend one day's debate on the Gracious Speech talking about law and order. We have had a long debate and many Members on both sides have contributed. I shall do my best, first, to comment on the points raised by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), especially those relating to Scotland. I shall then answer as many as possible of the points raised by other hon. Members.

After all the noise and fury of the past few minutes, the final comments of the hon. Member for Garscadden suggested that we had at last reached some agreement on the vexed question of the responsibility or otherwise of unemployment for creating crime. Having set up a marvellous Guy Fawkes to set alight and then knock down, the hon. Gentleman returned to the very position that Conservatives have taken all along—that unemployment is not the only cause but is clearly one of many causes which make problems such as crime more difficult. The fact that the hon. Gentleman can now say that and get away with it is welcome evidence of the happy fact that he has been reselected. We are all pleased about that.

Mr. Dewar: In reply to that piece of light wit, I suggest that the Secretary of State should be worrying about his own reselection rather than about the fate of individual Labour Members. I was protesting about the attitude of Conservative Members, including the Secretary of State, that anyone who suggested a link between crime and unemployment was somehow insulting the population of this country and was totally out of court. The right hon. Gentleman himself said in the Scottish Grand Committee that the suggestion of any such link was a slander on the unemployed. Is he now retreating from that position?

Mr. Younger: No. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that it is perfectly fair to say that unemployed people are more likely to commit crimes because they are unemployed, I think that that is a dreadful thing to say and I should not be party to it in any sense. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree with that.

The hon. Member for Garscadden referred to the legal aid measure for Scotland outlined in the Gracious Speech. The detailed proposals will be set out when the Bill is published. As the hon. Gentleman acknowledged, the aim is to bring most aspects of the administration of legal aid under the control of one body. That body will take over the responsibilities of the Law Society of Scotland and its various committees and also the assessment of financial eligibility for civil legal aid currently carried out by the Scottish Office. It will take over from the courts responsibility for criminal legal aid in summary cases.

The principal objective is to achieve greater efficiency and to meet the criticisms of conflict of interest and inconsistency which have been made by many people, including the hon. Member for Garscadden, the Law Commission and other bodies. The new body will be appointed by the Secretary of State, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that it will be independent in reaching its decisions on individual applications. The concentration of these functions in one body should in due course improve the administration of legal aid with better monitoring and increased accountability. The changes are not primarily designed to reduce the cost of administration of the legal aid arrangements, although I hope that that will be the result.

I stress that the Bill will not be concerned with altering the criteria for financial elegibility for civil legal aid, which will continue to be uprated in the usual way on a Great Britain basis. I think that that provides one of the main assurances that the hon. Gentleman sought. The provision of legal aid is not cash limited. It is a demand-determined service. Therefore, in the future, as now, those who qualify for legal aid will continue to receive it as in the past with, one hopes, rather better administration, and perhaps somewhat cheaper, if the proposed change produces the desired results. I hope that that reassures the hon. Gentleman, as it is important that people who think that they may need legal aid should not be afraid that it will be denied them as a result of the changes.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked me to comment on the effects in Scotland of the Public Order Acts. As he recognised, much of the subject has been covered in extenso in recent Scottish legislation. The abolition of the existing public order offences of riot, rout, unlawful assembly and affray and their replacement by a codified structure including the introduction of a new offence of disorderly conduct will not apply in Scotland. There are two reasons for this.

First, the Scottish Law Commission is considering the law of lobbying and rioting and it is proposed to await its recommendations as this is something on which we should get the best possible advice before making such a fundamental change. Secondly, the behaviour which the new offence of disorderly conduct is designed to deal with is already satisfactorily covered in Scotland by the common law offence of breach of the peace. I hope this will satisfy the hon. Gentleman.

Many hon. Members have asked about the Shops Act 1950. The experience in Scotland is extremely relevant. The legislation which the Government are to introduce in this Session to remove all statutory restrictions on retail trading hours has been covered in the Gracious Speech. It has long been recognised that the present legislation is an unsatisfactory anomaly, impossible to enforce fairly and consistently and does not reflect the needs and wishes of the people. The 1950 Act is purely a consolidation of previous legislation, much of which has been criticised. It contains provisions on general closing hours, the conditions of employment of shop workers in England, Wales and Scotland and a general prohibition of Sunday trading in England and Wales.

Most people believe that shop opening hours should not be regulated by law. I appreciate that this is a matter of opinion. Opinion polls, for what they are worth, have consistently shown that about two thirds of the population feel that the law should be changed so that shops may legally open on Sundays. Many people have questioned change, but many social changes have taken place since the law was formulated. People's domestic lives are quite different from those of an earlier age and they now want to be able to organise their shopping differently.

In Scotland, we have had freedom in shop opening hours on Sundays for many years. Although, from time to time, there may be objections about an individual place, the general experience has been quite satisfactory. There has not been a large volume of complaints. I recommend that this legislation be considered sympathetically as our experience in Scotland shows that the change has been welcome and valued.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Hon. Members from England are constantly asked whether the change in the law will radically alter the character of Sunday. Has Sunday, or the Sabbath, as Scottish people enjoy it, been significantly affected by Sunday trading?

Mr. Younger: This is a central question and I would not presume, even in answer to my hon. Friend, to give a firm view as to the possible effect in England. The experience in Scotland has not resulted in all shops being open on Sundays — it is rather the exception to find shops open, although I think their number is increasing. However, it has certainly not altered many Scottish people's habit of spending Sunday mornings, at least, going to church.

It is difficult to come to any conclusions because many other factors have been at work during that time to change shopping and churchgoing habits. I am sure, however, that if the law was generally unacceptable, I and my colleagues would have been inundated with complaints and with requests to change that law. We have not been inundated, and it might be of some value to English Members to learn of our experience.

Many hon. Members have mentioned the proposals concerning drugs. I am grateful to those who have welcomed what we have announced in the Gracious Speech. Anxiety has been expressed about the absence of provision for Scotland similar to that proposed for England. We have already so provided in the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1985, which became law only a few weeks ago. It is another case of the law south of the border following Scotland.

We are continuing to strengthen Customs efforts against drug smuggling. In July, we announced that a further 50 specialist investigators would be appointed. That means that the number of key investigative and

[Mr. Younger]

intelligence officers working in Customs on drugs inquiries has more than doubled in the past five years from 121 in 1979 to 262 by the end of this financial year. In October, we announced that a minimum of 150 additional preventive posts will be provided next year, bringing to 310 the number of such posts created since 1984 specificially to combat drug smuggling. The charge that nothing has been done simply will not stick.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) said that he was worried about the Home Secretary's proposals on Sunday trading—a subject of which Scotland has longer experience. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will be reassured to learn that, when it is published, the Bill will include a clause protecting existing retail employees from having to work on Sundays and giving continuing protection to young workers over working hours, meal breaks and overtime. Further details will be discussed in debates on the Bill.

The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) mentioned fraud—an important crime which does not get as much attention as it should. A committee chaired by Lord Roskill was appointed last year to consider what changes in law and procedure are necessary to improve fraud trials. The committee's report will be considered carefully. The Government are as anxious as the hon. Gentleman that those who are guilty of serious financial crimes should be prosecuted successfully.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) mentioned the treatment of alcohol-related crime and pleaded for the decriminalisation of drunkenness. Some offences must be treated as crime irrespective of whether alcohol is involved, but the Government accept that habitual drunkenness is a medical problem. Such thinking was reflected in section 5 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 which empowers police constables to take a drunk and disorderly person to a designated place instead of making an arrest.

As for England and Wales, we are encouraged by the development of police cautioning schemes under which offenders are arrested, kept in police cells until they have sobered up and then cautioned rather than prosecuted. It is for chief officers of police to decide whether to adopt such cautioning schemes. The police have considerable potential for diverting drunkenness offenders from the courts. The Government remain committed to treating drunkenness in that way.

Dr. Godman: Can the right hon. Gentleman remind me of the number of designated places in Scotland?

Mr. Younger: I am not sure what the precise number is. It is very few. I shall give the hon. Gentleman the precise figure. The point is that the principle is recognised and legislation on it has been passed in the House.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred to the force's reorganisation. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will undoubtedly bring the hon. Gentleman's comments to the attention of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. It is worth bearing in mind, as my right hon. Friend said in his speech, that the reorganisation will enable the commissioner to redeploy 200 officers on operational duties. I think that that meets the spirit of much of what the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said.

Trial time limits were mentioned by two hon. Members, and that is something in which hon. Members south of the border have shown some interest. As hon. Members will know, in solemn proceedings in Scotland, the accused has a historical right to have his case brought to trial within 110 days of the start of criminal proceedings, if he is held in custody, or 12 months if he is not. The Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 introduced a 40-day limit for those remanded in custody charged with summary offences. Those limits may be extended by the court if the delay in the proceedings is not the fault of the prosecutor, although such extensions are rare. The Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 introduced statutory time limits for England and Wales as part of the Home Secretary's strategy for reducing delay in bringing cases to trial.

I shall leave drugs and further measures on drugs for the present, as I have covered the principal questions that were asked.

I was asked about detention centres and prison sentences in them. The hon. Member for Garscadden referred to the Chiswick report. He will be aware that the report by Dr. Chiswick's working group on suicide precautions at Glenochil young offenders' institution and detention centre was published on 24 July and was the subject of an oral statement to Parliament. The Government's initial response to the report was laid with the report in the Library of both Houses. I recognised at the time the importance of the report on a subject that has generated a great deal of understandable public interest and concern.

The majority of the report's 63 recommendations were accepted and many are now in operation at the institution, thanks to the commendable efforts and positive approach of the governor and his staff. All the recommendations cannot be implemented overnight, but I can assure the House that no effort has been spared in following them up.

There have been calls, as was mentioned by the hon. Member for Garscadden, for a public inquiry to be set up in the light of deaths at Glenochil. It has been argued that a public inquiry is needed to allay public concern about the deaths.

Mr. Dewar: I know that the right hon. Gentleman takes the matter seriously and that is why I want to put the record straight. We were interested not so much in a public inquiry into the deaths—there have been fatal accident inquiries into the specific circumstances—as in a wider-ranging inquiry into the regime and its effectiveness in dealing with young offenders in that age group, particularly as it is the only recourse for the courts.

Mr. Younger: I appreciate those points, although I do not agree with them all. It is not the only recourse, and that is a very important point to make. I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern, and the fact that he does not necessarily mean a full public inquiry in the sense that I meant earlier. It has been argued by some that a public inquiry is essential to allay public concern and to ensure that full and open consideration is given to the wider issues such as the policy on the sentencing and custody of young offenders.

I believe that further inquiries or investigations at Glenochil would now seem inappropriate given the findings of the Chiswick report and the determinations of recent fatal accident inquiries. They gave a clean bill of

health to the Glenochil complex. That demonstrates that there is no evidence that there is anything in the regimes or in the actions of staff at either of the two institutions to which any of the deaths could have been attributed. Any reservations that have been expressed have concerned the detailed working procedures in the institutions, and I assure the hon. Gentleman that they are being actively pursued.

Mr. Dewar: I am sure that the Secretary of State would not want inadvertently to give the impression that our call for an inquiry into the regime was an implied criticism —or, even worse, a witch hunt—of the people working there at present, or that they have some responsibility for those sad deaths. That was never implied; in fact it was specifically ruled out by my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), who has a constituency interest, and by myself, from the Front Bench. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that it is a little eccentric to say that there is no need for such an inquiry in view of Dr. Chiswick's findings, when one of his findings was that there should be such an inquiry?

Mr. Younger: That is not precisely what the recommendations said. In one part of the report, it was said that a further inquiry could be made into some aspects. I do not think that Dr. Chiswick would say that he had suggested either a public inquiry or a wide-ranging inquiry. He and the fatal accident inquiries have given us one thing that is satisfactory, although we must not be complacent about it—that the tragic deaths, which we all deplore, were not directly attributable to the institutions, the regime or any of the staff. That is the important thing that we should hang on to.

I hope that I have answered several of the questions asked by hon. Members. The debate was on an important subject, and hon. Members brought their own flavours to it. The show was stolen by the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), who has explained to me that he has another engagement, so he cannot be here for the winding-up speeches. He struck exactly the right note when dealing with this complex matter. He valued and liked my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary's approach to the problem in his excellent opening speech, and I agree. With respect, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) did not match up to his right hon. Friend's high standard. He might think that it was a bit much to ask that he should.

The right hon. Member for Gorton came to the debate rather rattled by the fact that the provisions in the Queen's Speech had been generally well received. He was determined somehow to throw a spanner in the works. He came armed with about three statistics, and cleverly repackaged them four times in different ways to make a string of different figures. That was the right hon. Gentleman's technique—rather the same as a destroyer captain who is told, when he gets into trouble, to make smoke and call for full revs of the engine.

The hon. Member for Garscadden had a different technique. He was rather like a depressed dachshund in a cage, and decided that the best thing to do was bark as loudly and as long as he could in the hope that no one would have a look at his story. The hon. Gentleman made much of the figures. He produced a whole lot of crime figures to demonstrate what we all know, that there has been a great increase in crime. Unfortunately, he ran out of time for his preparation. It happens to all of us. I expect that he was called to the telephone or something. He forgot to tell us the only important statistic for Scotland, that the increase in numbers to bring the police up to full establishment has been prevented by one factor, and only one — that the Labour-controlled Strathclyde regional council has refused and still refuses to do so. The council has chosen to do so in the part of Scotland where the vast majority of crime takes place.

The hon. Gentleman is not only responsible for that, but he is a Member of Parliament in that region, as I am. To produce those statistics without telling us that was misleading and not worthy of the hon. Gentleman. He cannot deny with all the figures he likes to produce that, during the past six years, there has been a large and steady increase in the resources and money that have been devoted to fighting crime.

Mr. Dewar: Crime has increased.

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman is still saying from a sedentary position——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Urban Programme

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

10 pm

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): I am grateful to have the chance to bring up the subject of the urban programme. I am privileged that you, Mr. Speaker, have taken the Chair for this debate. Recent disturbances and civil disorder in our inner cities have focused our attention sharply on inner city problems generally. One thing is certain: these problems are not easily solved. They have taxed successive Governments for many years—Governments of different political persuasions, all of whom have shown concern and all of whom have introduced new and sometimes successful initiatives. This Government in particular have introduced initiatives. I am acutely aware of the concern shown and the action taken by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and his colleagues.

My family is no stranger to some of these issues. During the war my mother worked in slum housing in Liverpool. My father, who was an Army chaplain for 30 years, is now vicar of the East End parish of Greenwich. My wife worked in the probation service. We have all seen these problems at the sharp end.

In 1974 I was privileged to fight the general election in the constituency of Toxteth in Liverpool against the then Labour Member, the much-loved and respected Dick Crawshaw. I saw some of the city's problems. Despite the tremendous sense of humour of the Liverpudlian, even then there was an air of despair in Liverpool. There was poor housing — both public and private — and high unemployment. Most of industry had gone. There were a large number of immigrants, who were closely linked through their accommodation. Their prospects, especially of employment, were bleak. Crime was high. There was very bad environment—no green fields and no gardens. There was no real hope.

There were deprivations, but they were not limited to the great city of Liverpool. In order to respond to a variety of deprivations, the enhanced urban programme was introduced under the direction of the Department of the Environment in 1977. I congratulate the Government on strongly supporting that programme and on increasing its funding to £348 million in 1983-85—an increase in real terms of 43 per cent. over the inherited level of £165 million in 1979.

The Government have improved the thinking behind the programme, in particular bringing in the important voice of the private sector. They have required authorities to consult chambers of commerce. In 1982 they introduced the commercially oriented urban development grants. The Government have given support to the voluntary sector's contribution to tackling urban problems. They increased the value of support for projects run by or for ethnic minority groups nearly fourfold in the three years to 1984-85. The urban programme has been something of a success story.

Of course, that programme alone cannot reverse the decline, but it has certainly proved its worth as a way of involving a wide range of organisations in some effective projects. Moreover, the programme has succeeded in persuading local authorities, voluntary organisations and businesses to work with Government Departments to co-operate in promoting the new approaches that the citizens of towns and cities need. Opportunities for such collaboration are rare enough to deserve our recognition and support. That is why it is disturbing that after a period of development, this high quality programme—less than one two-hundredth of Government expenditure and excellent value for money—has been reduced in value by about 13 per cent. in real terms in the last year or two.

Tonight I am particularly concerned with the traditional urban programme aimed primarily at authorities such as Croydon, which contains my own constituency and yours, Mr. Speaker, where relative affluence for most residents sits alongside pockets of deprivation. Three years ago, 131 district and borough authorities secured support from the traditional urban programme. Their numbers have been gradually reduced, and this July the Department published a list of 46 authorities deemed eligible to apply for new projects from 1986 onwards. Croydon was not among them, nor were many other authorities containing pockets of deprivation.

On the surface, Croydon is affluent, with modern office blocks, excellent shopping facilities and crowds of shoppers. It has an excellent chamber of commerce and a local authority whose rates record is one of which we should all be proud. But behind that there are poor and deprived areas, particularly in the north of the borough, where there is still some very poor housing, an unusually high number of elderly people, a much higher than average number of one-parent families and a high ethnic population. However, housing problems are the most important reason why people in Croydon seek advice from their local citizens advice bureau and Members of Parliament.

Problems of homelessness also exist in that affluent borough. The Minister knows that I have been concerned with some of the problems associated with bed and breakfast accommodation used for the homeless. In April this year the Department announced that only two applications out of the 10 submitted by Croydon council had been approved for traditional urban programme funding this year. Neither of those applications, both of which were time-expired and came from voluntary organisations, was granted the full amount that they had requested, and one was told to expect funding to end after just two years.

In a year when 26 applications had been submitted, the news came as something of a blow to the many interested voluntary organisations. Now, this reduction in the amount of money has been superseded by the worse news that Croydon is not being invited to submit applications this year.

Traditional urban programme funding has had a significant impact on the range and effectiveness of services provided in that borough, particularly by voluntary organisations. I believe that there is a strong case for traditional urban programme money to be made available to the Croydon borough.

Let me mention some of the currently funded schemes, although there are many more. Croydon Gingerbread is a playschool which for years has provided after-school and holiday care for the children of single parents in the borough. In short, it is a magnificent venture. Croydon play council provides holiday play schemes. Drop-in is a youth counselling service. The North Croydon victims support scheme gives practical help and advice to victims

of crime. The Croydon Association for the Young Single Homeless provides supportive-type accommodation for 25 homeless young people, and that helps the local authority.

Among the ethnic groups, several of which are supported, there is the Pakistan Welfare Association, of which, Mr. Speaker, you are the chief patron. It does much good work in the borough.

I mention those organisations, but there are others no less valuable whose enthusiasm has been dampened by this latest news. I know, Mr. Speaker, of your enormous involvement in the work that goes on in the borough in these and other organisations that do much good for the community. The local guild of voluntary organisations is concerned about the threat to the continuity of the voluntary sector-based services posed by the traditional urban programme exclusion.

The Government argue that resources should be concentrated on the most deprived inner city areas. I accept the thinking behind that argument and see the logic in it. It is right that Lambeth, for example, should receive millions of pounds each year under the programme and that Croydon should receive less. But the resources available even to the inner city areas have fallen in real terms. The unemployed single parent living in a draughty flat in Croydon feels just as deprived as his counterpart elsewhere.

The trend is slightly worrying. Uncertainty and worry about the future surround existing projects. Where will the money come from? Will the local authorities take projects on board? In such an atmosphere of uncertainty will future projects so desperately needed be launched?

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary believes, as I do, that the urban programme has successfully brought together local and central Government, voluntary organisations and the private sector to pioneer new approaches to city problems. The Government are determined to press ahead with a variety of measures. The urban housing renewal unit is one such example.

I speak for many, not just those in Croydon but elsewhere, when I say that I hope that we shall maintain the traditional urban programme and keep up the real value of resources for voluntary organisations.

We all know the problems, but to none of us is given the answer. However I am cheered by the enormous enthusiasm of those who work on voluntary projects. People give up time and are not paid. They are constantly worried about money and constantly injecting new initiative and enterprise. Throughout the country thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of voluntary workers do much good work.

Some of what I have said tonight might appear to be critical of the Government. I do not want my remarks to be thought of in that light because this Government have a great deal to be proud of.

I am also cheered by the awareness of people of all political persuasions—and of none—that every section of society has a role to play in sorting out the problems. In the past that was thought to be the monopoly of the Government and some voluntary organisations. Today people are aware that not only politicians can help but industrialists, schools, churches, trade unions and ethnic leaders can play their part. The role of ethnic leaders is sure to be important in the years ahead. I think also of sporting bodies and the voluntary organisations themselves. Each of those groups, and many others, must join a partnership and rise to the challenge.

Only through a concerted effort of will by all of us shall we be able to hand over to the next generation towns and cities where growth and hope rather than decay and despair are to be found. I am an optimist and believe that that can be done by men of good will. I look to the Government to take a leading role in joining every strand of society to help to cure the city problems that recently have been brought to the front of our minds. I am sure that the problems can be solved.

10.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): The House has listened to a well-informed, positive, understanding and sympathetic speech. It is right that at the beginning of the new Session we should have an early debate on the problems in our inner cities and the development of the Government's urban programme.

My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) reminded the House that even in a seemingly prosperous suburb such as Croydon pockets of deprivation exist and that social problems have to be tackled. You, Mr. Speaker, are well aware of those problems as a constituency Member.

Ministers in my Department have paid great attention to the letters which we have received from you, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Pakistan Welfare Association, and from my hon. Friend on behalf of the same association and other organisations such as the Croydon Gingerbread group about their future and the decisions that we have taken about the traditional urban programme.

Croydon is currently in receipt of £382,000 assistance from central Government under the traditional urban programme. Therefore, we understand the anxiety about any decision that implies that those resources may be redirected to other authorities. I do not disguise the fact that the Government have had to take some tough and unpopular decisions on the urban programme. I hope to explain why we have done that.

My hon. Friend was generous in paying tribute to the Government's achievements on urban policy. The urban programme is but one vehicle for our urban policy, the main objectives of which are improving employment prospects and opportunities, reducing dereliction, strengthening the social fabric and reducing housing stress. That involves a fairly wide spread of programmes and policies involving a large number of Government departments, each reinforcing the other. They add up to a national attack on inner city problems, to which the Government collectively give a high priority.

Priority is not just a matter of increased public expenditure. My hon. Friend paid tribute to the energy and commitment of the voluntary organisations whose help we desperately need in tackling some of the social problems.

While the total of local authority current expenditure has increased in real terms since the Government took office, with many inner-city local authorities leading the field, it would be too simple to expect that the complex and long-term issues underlying the decline of many urban centres could be settled by blanket spending, irrespective of efficiency, the effective targeting of resources and the effect on the households and private firms which must pay through rates and taxes for what the local authority spends.

[Sir George Young]

We must back policies that strengthen the processes of investment and job creation rather than weaken them. That is why the Department of Employment, and especially my right hon. Friend's policies for strengthening enterprise and improving training, play an increasingly central part in our urban policy.

In his excellent speech this evening, my hon. Friend concentrated on the direction and administration of resources, as well as mentioning their scale. The Government have given a high priority to the clarification of objectives for urban policy and the improved targeting and management of programmes that deliver them. That is not because we have anything to conceal on the scale of resources. Indeed, my hon. Friend mentioned that in his speech.

Since 1978-79, urban programme expenditure has risen from £93 million to £338 million. Over the period, nearly £2 billion has been allocated in support of local authority programmes of urban renewal. We have deliberately concentrated resources on the worst areas and have sought to work with local authorities, such as Croydon, to ensure that the maximum value for money is obtained.

Many authorities have every reason to be proud of their record in using the opportunities provided by the urban programme. The local focus for the administration of the programme is important. Needs and potential for action differ from area to area, and in clarifying objectives at national level we have been careful to leave room for sensible local variations in priorities and choice of action.

We have encouraged authorities to go for strategies that support economic development, improve the environment and encourage business confidence. They have recently agreed a management initiative from which better structured inner area programmes, with clearer statements of local objectives, will emerge. Better monitoring and quantification of output, as well as more clearly defined management responsibilities, have been encouraged.

I shall quote from the Islington strategy statement about the programme and especially about partnership. It said:

"There has been a perceptible improvement in the Borough's environment which is largely due to Partnership funding; none of the rolling programmes would exist without Partnership."

On the central Government side, the co-ordination and targeting of Government programmes in the partnership areas has been improved by the city action teams. It is part of their job to ensure that national programmes are well related to local needs and that all opportunities for joint action are exploited vigorously.

This work has been helped by the greatly improved regional policy map, which now includes all the partnership areas outside London and all but three of the programme authorities. The social departments are becoming increasingly involved in the work of the city action teams, not least the Home Office with its programmes of support for the voluntary sector and ethnic minorities, to which my hon. Friend referred.

My hon. Friend referred to the voluntary sector. The growth of urban programme funding for the voluntary sector has been a particular success, and I endorse my hon. Friend's tribute to that sector's contribution, which is often made in areas where the statutory agencies are less adaptable and less freely innovative in their response to particular needs. This year, some £78 million of urban programme resources will be used to back voluntary sector schemes.

There has been a particularly rapid growth in expenditure on projects which are run by or primarily for the benefit of ethnic minority groups, and my hon. Fried referred to the figures, which have risen from £6 million in 1980-81 to £31 million in 1985-86. The Hackney partnership committee produced a paper in which it said:

"Probably the major change is that through Partnership the Council has started to open its ears to the very sizeable black and ethnic communities in Hackney who had previously been alienated from the processes of local government."

My hon. Friend referred to urban development grant. This has promoted private sector investment on some of the rather difficult inner city sites about which we all know. By the end of last month, 165 schemes had been approved. These involve grant offers of £74 million but private sector investment of no less than £325 million. About £60 million of the approved grant will enable industrial and commercial projects, creating 16,000 jobs to go ahead. The remainder is concentrated on housing development, leading to the provision of nearly 4,000 homes.

The action we have taken is consistent with the recommendations in the Scarman report on inner city policy and housing, Lord Scarman recommended that there should be a better co-ordinated and directed attack on inner city problems to ensure that the resources that the nation is able to devote to the inner city are effectively spent.

The city action teams and urban programme management initiatives which I have described contribute directly to that objective. In his statement to the House on 21 October, the Home Secretary confirmed that the Government would continue their strong commitment to urban regeneration and attached great importance to ensuring thatthe substantial government resources for inner city areas, including the programmes of the Home Office and other Departments, including my Department's contribution, were spent to the best advantage and were directed to the real needs of the people who lived there.

The housing initiatives that my Department is now taking through the urban housing renewal unit, to which my hon. Friend paid tribute, are fully consistent with Lord Scarman's emphasis on involving the community in housing management and development. We are also working with local authority associations, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Institute of Housing to improve the responsiveness of public sector housing management to the needs of ethnic minorities.

Increased housing choice and opportunities for low-cost home ownership are also being promoted by the urban housing renewal unit, which was set up to encourage local authorities to improve the management of their stock, to involve tenants and to explore private sector solutions to their most problematic estates. The unit is also concerned to improve standards of housing education and management.

It is funding 15 post graduate studentships on the LSE's housing management course.

Another strand of the Government's urban policy is designed to stimulate the urban land market. Far too much land is lying idle, for no good reason. That is why the derelict land grant programme has grown from £23 million in 1979 to £82 million this year. The programme is

concentrated on recycling land and on schemes which lead to development. The powers that we have under the land register system to require public sector owners to dispose of unused land are also being used.

There have been other initiatives. The garden festival in Liverpool—my hon. Friend fought a constituency there in 1974—and garden festivals in Stoke, Glasgow and Gateshead are all going ahead, combining action to reclaim severely derelict sites by turning them into a focus for renewed confidence and investment.

The other strand has been the urban development corporations which are proving outstandingly effective in tackling vast tracts of disused land in the heart of London and Merseyside. Nearly £80 million will be spent by the public sector on the two UDCs this year. So far, public investment in the London dockland area has attracted £860 million of private investment. Communications are being improved by the light railway and the STOLport. By 1990, nearly 10,000 private houses will have been built in an area which previously offered few opportunities for home ownership.

Some of those initiatives give the flavour of the range of initiatives that the Government have been pursuing. My hon. Friend mentioned the corrected geographical scope for those initiatives. He mentioned the impact of that initiative on Croydon and some other authorities that receive urban programme help.

It is right that the bulk of our resources should be concentrated on the areas with the most severe needs. Since 1979, the urban programme has allocated £150 million to the Birmingham partnership and £140 million to the Liverpool partnership—substantial sums of money which reflect the severity and complexity of the economic and social problems at the heart of the major conurbations. There are 23 programme authorities receiving annual allocations of up to £5·5 million.

The selection of authorities was last reviewed in 1983, and we have given assurances to a number of authorities that narrowly missed promotion on that occasion that their cases will be reconsidered and their submissions taken fully into account when the selection of authorities is next reviewed. In the meantime, they have the benefit of allocations through the traditional urban programme, and in the case of designated districts there is an annual allocation for economic and commercial projects.

The appropriate geographical scope of the traditional urban programme, which picks up the needs of authorities such as Croydon without partnership or programme status, has been much debated.

I do not dispute that many local authorities can demonstrate the existence of pockets of deprivation—to use my hon. Friend's expression — within their administrative areas, where, for example, there is a high rate of residential unemployment, poor housing, a concentration of pupils with educational difficulties or households with special social needs. In so far as those characteristics can be picked up by the census, the method of analysis which my Department uses is sensitive to the needs of small areas. The overall assessment of need is built up from census information at enumeration district level—a basic unit of about 150 households.

The real argument is that it is not appropriate or feasible for the urban programme to give specific assistance to every deprivation black spot in the country. If we were to do that, it would place too great a burden on the specific grant machinery. It would also spread our resources too thinly and tend to give assistance to authorities that could cope and have shown that they can run successful projects on their own from within their own resources.

In concentrating the urban programme on a list of about 80 authorities, including partnership and programme authorities as well as recipients of the traditional urban programme, we have tried to select those with the highest overall intensity of need, those with the greatest scale and concentration of problems and those with the highest levels of unemployment. There is no unique way of doing that and no absolutely authoritative ranking of authorities in terms of a single index of deprivation. I do not believe that there ever will be. We must use our judgment to interpret the statistics.

I understand the problems that that has caused authorities such as Croydon. There is an assurance that there will be no abrupt termination of approvals which have already been given. In Croydon many of the organisations that receive help will continue to do so until 1990. The traditional urban programme has supported and will continue to support in Croydon important projects for ethnic minorities, disadvantaged groups and young people. There should be no problem with those projects where we have given an undertaking to fund for a given number of years.

On the broader point, there is evidence that the voluntary sector can work with the local authority to tackle the problems. I hope that Croydon will not always need the incentive of central Government grant to take account of the potential of the voluntary sector in its area.

The total value of approvals in Croydon over the past five years has been about £250,000. I hope that the urban programme has made an impact. However, one is back to the difficult decisions of public expenditure which have been debated frequently in this Chamber.

Public expenditure involves difficult decisions on priorities, and there can be no doubt that the relative disadvantage of many other areas, especially those which are facing the pressing problem of unemployment, has deepened, and it is to those authorities that the Government have decided to give priority.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 8 November 1985

The House met a half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Dog Fighting

9.35 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I beg to ask leave to present a petition on the subject of dog fighting, standing in the name of Mr. R. Blower of 65 Bourne View, Greenford, Middlesex, in my constituency. It is signed by many of my constituents, and by many others beyond it. It says:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of Citizens of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, sheweth:

(1) That under the Protection of Animals Act 1911, the penalties for causing or procuring animals to fight are not commensurate with the barbarity of such illegal cruelty.

(2) That there is no restriction on the importation, sale or advertising of dogs favoured by those involved in dogfighting.

The whole House and country are aware of the disgraceful dog fighting which has been promoted and for which people have been convicted and sentenced, but for short sentences of only two months. The country seeks much stronger sentences for those convicted of this disgraceful and vicious behaviour. It is to that end that I present this petition this morning. It has my wholehearted support and, I am sure, that of all hon. Members. It goes on to say:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will take all such measures as lie within their power

(1) To substantially increase the penalties for those convicted of causing, procuring or assisting at the fighting or baiting of any animal.

(2) To introduce mandatory disqualification of ownership and custody of any animal for those convicted of such offences.

(3) To ban the importation, sale and advertising of Pit Bull Terriers.

(4) To prohibit the advertising of any Bull Dog's "fighting qualities", "gameness" or other such descriptions which might attract dogfighting enthusiasts.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[THIRD DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [6 November]

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament—*[Sir Reginald Eyre].*

Question again proposed.

Foreign Affairs and Overseas Development

9.37 am

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I intend to concentrate most of my remarks today on the important issues of East-West relations and arms control, and on the contribution that a stronger Europe can make to that. My right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) will deal with further points raised in the debate.

Before I turn to the main subjects, I should like to bring the House up to date on three other important areas where the Government have recently been active in international affairs. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already drawn the attention of the House to the wide range of the discussion and the extent of common ground achieved at the meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government at Nassau last month. That meeting showed again the unique scope and nature of the Commonwealth. We reached wide agreement on measures to increase the security of small states and on the need to devise more effective action to counter international terrorism and to halt drug abuse. Britain played a major part in securing those significant, practical agreements. We shall now work hard to put them into practice.

The discussions at Nassau were dominated by developments in Africa, and in particular the growing crisis in South Africa. The House has had the opportunity to debate the Commonwealth accord on South Africa. Nobody in this country or overseas who has read the reports of that debate could fail to be impressed by the broad measure of agreement—indeed, by the profound feeling on both sides of the House—on the evils of apartheid and, in the words of the Gracious Speech, on the need for "peaceful, fundamental change."

The Commonwealth agreed to establish a group of eminent people, who will seek to promote a dialogue between the South African Government and representatives of the black community. As the House will be aware, the British nominee for the group is my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Barber of Wentbridge. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) will recognise that Lord Barber is a man well known to the House by

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

virtue of his distinguished career in public service, including, of course, a term of office as Chancellor of the Exchequer. He belongs to the moderately exclusive club to which the right hon. Gentleman and I belong. He is equipped beyond that, by virtue of his more recent experience in working with many African countries, to make a knowledgeable and comprehensive contribution to the work of the group.

The 60 nations of the Commonwealth and the European Community have together given a plain political signal of the need for fundamental peaceful change in South Africa. As the Commonwealth accord acknowledged, it is not for outside countries to prescribe specific constitutional changes for South Africa. It is important to acknowledge that some significant legislative and other changes have been announced there, but the whole House wants to see from the South African Government more movement, more quickly. Above all, there is a need for effective dialogue with genuine black leaders. We urge the South African Government to take the earliest possible steps in that direction. In that connection, it is a matter of considerable concern that, since the Commonwealth meeting, they have introduced further sweeping restrictions on the press. These can do nothing to promote the essential objective of rapid peaceful change, which we all seek.

Peaceful change in South Africa is essential for the wider stability and prosperity of southern Africa as a whole. We have strongly condemned South African incursions into Angola. We equally deplore attempts to undermine security in Mozambique, and we shall continue to work for implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 435 on Namibia and the withdrawal of foreign troops.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government also discussed international economic issues, especially the urgent measures needed to deal with the related problems of debt, exchange rate instability and protectionism. As we reaffirmed at Nassau, the Government remain committed to a substantive aid programme. That is true both for emergency relief—where our record on famine relief to Africa and earthquake relief in Mexico has demonstrated our firm and continuing commitment—and for long-term development. We shall also continue to support the invaluable work of the voluntary agencies. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will have more to say about this subject.

The report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs on famine in Africa, published in May, was a characteristically useful contribution to the House's consideration of this pressing and difficult topic. I take this opportunity, on behalf of the House, to pay tribute to the invaluable work of that Committee, under the distinguished chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Sir A. Kershaw.)

Another issue of great importance on which we have received heartening support from members of the Commonwealth is our commitment to the people of the Falkland Islands. As the Gracious Speech makes plain, we shall continue to honour that commitment. We shall also continue to work for more normal relations with Argentina. Since 1982 we have taken a series of initiatives designed to open the way to practical co-operation with Argentina. So far, however—although some Members of the House in their contacts with the Argentines have appeared to ignore this fact—there has been almost no response.

Nowhere is a co-operative approach more necessary than in the conservation of the south-west Atlantic fishery. The need to conserve the fishing stocks is universally accepted. It is plain common sense that conservation can best be achieved by co-operation among all those with an interest in orderly fishing in that region. That is why we have supported the initiative by the Food and Agriculture Organisation to put in place a multilateral fisheries regime. The first need is to establish the facts. To help in that, we have commissioned a study of the south-west Atlantic fishery from Dr. Beddington of Imperial college. This has now been completed and has been placed in the Library. We shall make it available to the FAO and the other fishing nations.

Our approach to this issue is wholly practical. We want an effective multilateral regime, entirely without prejudice to our position on sovereignty. I was encouraged to see recent press reports suggesting that the Argentine Government may be thinking on the same lines. The recent victory in the elections of Senor Alfonsin's party is a sign that democracy is being strengthened in Argentina. We welcome that, and we regard it as all the more reason for the Argentine Government to adopt our approach of looking for ways of reducing tension and co-operating together in a practical and sensible way.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): That electoral victory having been won, is it not all the more reason for the Government at least to recognise that sovereignty must be discussed—albeit very low down the list of topics—or they will get nowhere?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There is no reason to change our position on that. We are approaching this practical matter without prejudice to the different positions held on sovereignty. We made clear our view on it when we attempted to establish a basis for talks in Berne more than a year ago. I have nothing to add to what we said then.

Obviously, I cannot discuss in great depth all aspects of the middle east, but the House will recognise that the depressing cycle of violence and retaliation has underlined the urgency of a negotiated settlement of the region's problems, and yet has at the same time made progress in that direction more difficult.

In the Gulf, we fully support the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General. They remain the best hope for peace there, and we urge all those involved to work with him to find an early settlement.

The hijacking of the Achille Lauro, and the brutal murder of an innocent American passenger, reminded us of the ever-present alternative to Arab-Israel peace talks: a new wave of extremism in the region. The Prime Minister and I had hoped that my planned meeting last month with a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation would carry forward King Hussein's brave initiative for peace in the region. Unfortunately, and as King Hussein made clear, that meeting did not take place because of a last-minute change of mind on the part of the Palestinians. That was an opportunity missed, but we shall continue the search for ways to support the peace process. In the meantime, we look forward to the visit to Britain of Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Peres, early next week.

We shall maintain our support, too, for UNIFIL—the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. This force is a

contribution that the international community can make to stability in that tragic country. Our ambassador and his staff in Beirut are also working to secure the early release of the British United Nations official held hostage in Lebanon, Mr. Alec Collett. Such personal cases are among the most difficult and distressing problems that a Foreign Secretary must consider. The safe release of Britons detained in several countries, often for long periods without any or sufficient justification, is a subject of daily concern to me and my colleagues. We know the agonising uncertainty that families must endure. I know, too, that the plight of such people can often be made more difficult by public discussion, which is why I have mentioned only one name. We try to keep those Members who are directly concerned with these cases closely informed. The House will understand why, in the interests of those people, I think it best to say no more about individual cases here.

I referred to the efforts of our ambassador in Beirut, Sir David Miers. He returns to Britain very soon after representing Britain with distinction in an especially dangerous post. He is one among many members of the Diplomatic Service who, in today's increasingly violent world, risk their lives in the service of our country, and to whom the House will wish to pay tribute.

I said at the outset that one of the main themes I wished to tackle today was the task of improving East-West relations. In this, as in other areas of our foreign policy, our voice has been immeasurably strengthened by our ability to speak with the joint authority of our European partners. That is why we have proposed, as the Gracious Speech makes clear, that Community co-operation in foreign policy should be strengthened, by placing political co-operation on a more lasting foundation. I am glad to report that discussions on that proposal—based mainly on the original United Kingdom text—are making good progress.

Europe is central to Britain's foreign policy. Unlike the Labour party, we have a clear and unequivocal position. The Community provides much of the framework for Britain's relations, not just with most of the European democracies, but with our other allies and trading partners. If the United States stands as one pillar of the Western alliance for peace, the other pillar of the Atlantic arch stands right here in Europe.

Today, more than ever, Britain's influence in the world is linked to our place in Europe. That is why we have been committed, since we acceded to the Rome treaty in 1973, to its goal of

"ever closer union among the peoples of Europe".

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister joined other European Heads of Government at Stuttgart two years ago in defining that aim as being to deepen and broaden the scope of the Community's activities so as to cover a growing proportion of member states' mutual relations and their external relations.

European unity is not a question of constitutional theory; it is about practical realities. It is about improving the prospects of economic success and of success in the fight against unemployment; breaking down the barriers to trade; easing the burdens on business and exploiting our common technological strength; and working together, in internal and external policy alike, for objectives which no single member state can achieve on its own.

The outcome of the inter-governmental conference, set up at the last Milan European Council, must be measured against those yardsticks. One of the questions being discussed at the conference is whether or not to change the Treaty of Rome. The treaty is not immutable, but if we are to consider change, it must be change for a purpose.

We shall judge any proposals which come for consideration by Heads of Government in Luxembourg in December by the extent to which they correspond to the objectives that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister set out in Milan. How far will they make a real difference to completion of a genuine common market? How far will they strengthen political co-operation? How far, in other words, will they make a real contribution to European unity?

We in Britain can take particular satisfaction in the forthcoming accession to the Community of Portugal and Spain. As the Gracious Speech makes plain, the Bill providing for enlargement will be brought forward shortly. Enlargement is being accompanied by important and positive developments for Gibraltar, based on our firm commitment to respect the wishes of the Gibraltar people. This is the basis on which I shall pursue these and other questions when I hold a round of discussions with my Spanish colleague in Madrid next month.

I told the House in March that the search for mutual security between East and West would be a long haul. Nothing in the past six months has altered my view, nor my belief that progress can be, and is being, made.

The House has given welcome and broad-based support to the efforts which the Government have been making over the past two years to improve our relations with the East. Most recently, we have continued that process with the important visit to this country of the general secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers party, Mr. Kadar. I have had further extensive discussions with the Foreign Ministers of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Dialogue is not an end in itself, nor will it change people's minds overnight, but it is an essential part of the steady process of building trust and understanding.

In pursuing that approach, we shall certainly not turn a blind eye to those aspects of Soviet and East European conduct that cause widespread anxiety in the House, and, indeed, throughout the country regarding Afghanistan and human rights.

On the many occasions when I have met Mr. Gromyko, and now Mr. Shevardnadze, I have urged them to take practical action on particular cases. The recent news that the Soviet Union intends to release for medical treatment in the West Mrs. Yelena Bonner, the wife of Dr. Andrei Sakharov, is at last a step, but only a step, in the right direction.

There have been reports that the Soviet Union may be thinking of some liberalisation of its policy on Jewish emigration. Let us wait and see. I am sure that the whole House will join me in urging them to take that action, for which we have long pressed and which is long overdue.

As I made clear to Mr. Shevardnadze in New York in September, we seek a constructive long-term relationship with the Soviet Union, but not at the expense of national security, nor of speaking our minds on the points where we disagree, nor of being ready to stand up for democratic values. There should be no doubt in Soviet minds of the seriousness of our purpose. Arms control is an integral part in that relationship, and the Gracious Speech reaffirms in clear terms the commitment of the Government to arms control.

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

Along with all our allies, we are determined to achieve balanced and verifiable measures of arms control, covering a wide range of weapons and activities. We are pressing particularly hard, in the negotiations in Geneva, where we shall be in the Chair next year, for a total verifiable ban on chemical weapons. We also look for real progress in the CDE and MBFR negotiations at Stockholm and Vienna.

The House will, I am sure, wish to appreciate the importance of the part the Government have been playing in helping to shape the arms control strategy of the West as a whole. We have been able to do that because of the essentially democratic nature of the North Atlantic Alliance. Between the NATO democracies, and within them, there is a give and take of views. As the arms control debate has unfolded, this Government have played a leading part in securing an agreed position within the alliance.

The ministerial meetings of NATO, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and I attend, have been particularly important in underlining the commitment of the alliance as a whole to stable, balanced arms control, based on enhanced deterrence and scrupulous observance of treaty obligations. My right hon. Friend and I have been able to play an extremely active part in those debates.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): Will the Foreign Secretary tell us whether at last week's NATO council meeting Mr. Weinberger revealed the proposals which President Reagan announced two days later? Were they the proposals to which the council gave its support?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There was a discussion of the proposals. In that context, the NATO council gave its united support to the approach.

Mr. Healey: Were they the new proposals?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think I am right in saying that the proposals were discussed then. There has been a great deal of discussion since then, and two days later there followed a broadcast by President Reagan.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has also made an important contribution in her personal meetings with President Reagan and other Western Heads of Government.

Even the right hon. Member for Leeds, East will by now have come to appreciate the importance of the four points agreed between my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and President Reagan at Camp David last December. That meeting, with its emphasis on the need to adhere to existing treaty obligations, can now be seen to have laid the basis for what has since become the strategy of the whole North Atlantic Alliance. It was on that foundation of respect for existing obligations that the June meeting of the North Atlantic council was able to confirm to President Reagan the alliance's view of the importance of observing the constraints of the Salt II treaty regime.

That process of consultation within the alliance, in which my right hon. friend the Prime Minister has played such an important role, will not stop with the summit that is to take place in a couple of weeks time. She and I will meet President Reagan immediately after the summit to discuss the way ahead.

There is another fact that needs to be recorded about the part played by Her Majesty's Government within the Western alliance. The one certain way of diminishing our influence and of destroying the role of the British Government overnight would be the adoption of the defence and foreign policies of the Labour party.

Britain's voice is heard in this debate, not because we have opted out of Western defence, but because we have been pulling our weight. The alliance has remained united, from the deployment of cruise missiles in Great Britain just two years ago to this week's welcome decision on INF deployment by the Netherlands Government, precisely because of our determination to stay together. President Reagan goes into the final stages of preparation for his meeting with Mr. Gorbachev confident that he has the free, full and united support of his NATO allies. It must be said plainly that the Government have played a full part in shaping and sustaining that support.

A large part of the discussions to which I have been referring has been focused on President Reagan's strategic defence initiative. Far too little attention has been paid to longstanding and comprehensive Soviet activities in the same area. As I pointed out in my speech to the Royal United Services Institute in March, that lack of balance has distorted the debate.

Mr. Healey:

"But when they seldom come they wish'd-for come, And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents."

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am always glad to welcome the right hon. Gentleman's support for the wisdom that I occasionally manage to utter, and he has endorsed that particular speech many times.

I remind the right hon. Gentleman and the House of the key facts. The Soviet Union is alone in having deployed a sophisticated localised defence against ballistic missile attack, which it is now upgrading. The Soviet Union is also alone in having deployed an anti-satellite system capable of threatening important Western targets. Those activities, technically legitimate as they may be, demonstrate the hollowness of the Soviet claim that the threatened "militarisation of space" arises purely from American research.

That is not all. For a number of years now the Soviet Union has been carrying out an extensive programme covering high energy lasers, particle beam weapons, kinetic energy weapons, and all the associated paraphernalia for rapid progress towards a major expansion of its capability against ballistic missiles. It has begun to develop a new and significant ability to transport into space the massive equipment which would be necessary for a defence system beyond the atmosphere. It is also working to improve its ability to detect and track ballistic missile targets.

What have we heard from the Russians about such activities? Until now, we have heard virtually nothing. It is only the persistent disclosure by the West of the scale of Soviet research that has forced them belatedly to admit their own involvement in these areas. Even now, they have refused to acknowledge its true extent.

That discussion, too, is taking place upon the basis of the Camp David four points agreed between President Reagan and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. One of those four points, of the highest importance in this context, is that the strategic defence initiative should be pursued in full conformity with existing treaty obligations.

The importance of that has been expressly reaffirmed by the US Government. Secretary of State Shultz has confirmed, too, that their position is based upon a restrictive interpretation of the ABM treaty. President Reagan has made it clear that if success in research suggests further steps are desirable the US will be ready to consult its allies and discuss and negotiate on them with the Russians.

Each one of those points is a vital component of the Western position to which we and other European Governments attach high importance. Discussions of the kind suggested should be devoted to reaching agreement on how existing treaties apply to new technologies developed since they were signed.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in New York, it is desirable for both sides to engage in an attempt to clarify ambiguities. We hope that they can seek a firm basis of understanding, while research programmes continue over the years, on what is and what is not permissible in the way of research.

The latest Soviet ideas relate to strategic and intermediate nuclear forces. They are a response to earlier US proposals. For many months we have urged the Russians to abandon their megaphone diplomacy — to stop relying on minority opinions in the West as a substitute for serious negotiations with the Americans— and to put forward their own ideas in detail. This they have now done, and it represents a tribute to the steadfastness of the alliance in pressing our case.

I shall not go into detail on the Soviet offer. I certainly endorse the judgment of NATO Defence Ministers that it is one-sided and self-serving. The West will never accept a Soviet definition of strategic nuclear forces which attacks the very core of alliance defence policy and preserves Soviet advantages in areas vital for our security.

I acknowledge, however, some positive elements in the proposals on which we can build, such as the proposals for significant cuts in the number of weapons systems and warheads, the prospect of independent agreement on INF, separated from the artificial linkage which the Russians have created with other aspects of the negotiations, and some recognition that UK and French forces are not an appropriate subject for bilateral negotiation between Moscow and Washington.

Mr. Gorbachev has also made a formal offer to the British Government of direct talks on nuclear forces and arms control matters. In the Prime Minister's reply delivered yesterday, she welcomed the prospect of a deeper dialogue. We agree that it is important for European Governments to talk to each other about the issues affecting the future of our continent. My right hon. Friend has made it clear that our position in respect of our own forces remains the same. There are essential conditions to be fulfilled if we are to review our position. We must first see radical reductions in the super-power arsenals without any significant change in Soviet defensive capability. We have made it clear that in those circumstances we should be ready to look afresh at the whole question.

We are ready and willing in future contacts to explore with the Russians the wider aspects of arms control, including the need for increased confidence and greater stability in the East-West relationship.

In her reply to Mr. Gorbachev's message, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister proposed that this dialogue on the wider aspects of arms control should be pursued by the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr. Shevardnadze, and me. I hope that he will be able to take up my invitation to visit this country before too long. Meanwhile, the US-Soviet negotiations in Geneva will continue to be the right place for arms control talks on nuclear weapons.

The United States Government have very recently put forward fresh proposals involving deep cuts in offensive weapons. These build upon their earlier approach. They respond to concepts in the Russian counter-proposals on which progress might be made, while rejecting other obviously one-sided features to which I have referred. The latest American proposals reaffirm NATO's willingness to halt, reverse or modify its deployment, provided that reductions can be agreed on the basis of principles to which all allies subscribe. The Government have given their full support to this new United States move.

The talks are still at the beginning of what may turn out to be an extended process of negotiation. It would be unrealistic to expect detailed agreements to emerge from the meeting between the President and Mr. Gorbachev, but if the will to seek agreement is there, that meeting could set the negotiations on a new path. It is the Government's profound hope that they will be the first purposeful, determined steps towards balanced arms reductions. We shall continue to ensure that our objectives, and our concerns, are fully reflected in the Western position.

When they meet in Geneva, President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev will be taking part in the first US-Soviet summit for seven years. That is the culmination of a steady process of dialogue between East and West. Britain has played an active and, at some stages, a vital role. We have been able to make this contribution because we are a loyal member of NATO, firmly committed to the defence of Britain, and playing a central political role in Europe. We are proud that we have helped to create an historic opportunity to begin again the long and testing journey towards better understanding and greater trust between the two giants of East and West.

I am sure that the whole House will join me in wishing President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev a productive and successful first meeting.

10.6 am

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): Like the Foreign Secretary, I want to concentrate on the forthcoming Geneva summit where the leaders of the two most powerful countries in the world will meet. Our survival will depend in part on how that meeting goes. I strongly endorse the Foreign Secretary's closing words in that regard.

I shall not talk about the economic problems facing the European Community, although the outlook is as depressing as I can ever remember. The Foreign Secretary referred to Spain and Portugal joining the Community just six weeks from now, but the last meeting of Community Finance Ministers failed utterly to take account of that in arrangements for the budget next year. We shall have an opportunity to discuss the Common Market budget next week, I believe, so some of those issues can be left until then.

I shall not talk about South Africa, which we debated a fortnight ago. I am sure that we shall return to the subject many times in the new Session. I do not applaud the choice of Lord Barber as the British representative on the Commonwealth mission — I do not think that the chairman of Standard Chartered Bank can be regarded as

[Mr. Denis Healey]

totally without bias in these matters. I can only hope that the noble Lord distances himself as much from the Prime Minister on South African matters as he did from the Prime Minister's views on monetary problems when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I should like to say just a word about Argentina. Even *The Times* welcomed the recent meetings between my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, me and the leader of the Liberal party and President Alfonsin on the grounds that they had decisively broken the taboo on discussions of Falklands problems. I hope that, in spite of what he said today, the Foreign Secretary will exploit the opportunities that we have offered him to produce an environment in which we can at least reduce the heavy burden on our economy and defences imposed by the Prime Minister's Fortress Falklands policy.

The Foreign Secretary must recognise that practical co-operation with Argentina on matters such as fisheries and communications with the Falkland Islands are bound to depend on our readiness to discuss all aspects of the Falklands problem.

Let me pass to the summit meeting. I deplore the tendency by newspapers and the Government to treat this essentially as a propaganda battle and to pay excessive attention to who is winning the propaganda war. I gather that when the Prime Minister last conversed with President Reagan she asked for a repackaging of the American proposals, as though they would be more acceptable if presented in gift-wrapping rather than brown paper.

The Foreign Secretary was curiously evasive in telling us whether the proposals which the NATO council discussed on Wednesday last week were the same as those put to the Soviet Union on Friday. My understanding is that they were not. The NATO council has not, so far, discussed the proposals as they were presented last Friday to the Soviet Government.

The real issues that underlie this so-called propaganda war are of vital importance to the people of Britain no less than to the people of the United States and the Soviet Union. Like the editor of the *Financial Times*, I could only see as a profound let down the speech at the United Nations in which President Reagan trailed his approach to the summit. Even as a propaganda effort it was clearly aimed at the right wing in his own Republican party rather than at world opinion.

Of course it is important that the Soviet Union and the United States should discuss regional problems that might bring them to blows. I welcome the talks on these matters which have already taken place, at least at official level, although I doubt that the President was wise to talk in September about joint Soviet-American "intervention" in the Third world. But in his United Nations speech the President's choice of issues was gravely one sided and his description, especially of what was happening in Nicaragua, was ludicrously distorted. Above all, he left out entirely the regional problems of the middle east where the risks to world peace are the greatest and where the Soviet Union and the United States are already directly and militarily involved.

In half of the middle east—the eastern half—Russia and the United States have reached a close understanding about the Gulf war which has already been responsible for the loss of one million lives. They should be trying to bring it to an end rather than acting simply as co-belligerents with Iraq. Surely they need to reach an understanding with the other half of the middle east on how to get peace between Israel and her neighbours.

I shall mercifully draw a veil over the lamentable diplomatic shambles that attended the recent visit of two PLO representatives to London. I shall draw a veil also over the American achievement in undermining America's two best friends in the Arab world—King Hussein, by banning a contract to provide him with arms, and President Mubarak, by skyjacking the Egyptian aircraft and failing to apologise for doing so.

Now that the dust has settled, it is clearer than ever that no progress on the problems separating Israel from her Arab neighbours can be made without involving the PLO —both King Hussein and President Mubarak restated that during the past few days — nor can progress be made without the acquiescence, if not the positive co-operation, of both Syria and the Soviet Union. Until, somehow, diplomacy can create a framework that takes account of those two facts, all purely Western efforts to encourage a settlement are bound to fail. I hope that the Minister for Overseas Development will tell us precisely what the Prime Minister meant at Question Time the other day when she talked about the need for a framework for a new initiative for such talks. I believe that the framework must include the PLO, Syria and the Soviet Union.

I welcome the indications that Prime Minister Peres is now in contact with the Soviet Union and is seeking diplomatic recognition of Israel and the release of more Jews who wish to settle in his country. I hope very much that the summit at least assists in that regard.

The central problem facing the summit—the problem which has made it the focus of interest for thinking people all over the world—is whether it will help to bring the nuclear arms race to an end. My concern, which I have expressed many times to the House, is that the nuclear arms race is moving into an area that will make arms control more difficult and war more likely, unless it can be stopped now. It is a staggering fact that the United States and the Soviet Union between them now have 20,000 strategic nuclear warheads and well over 50,000 nuclear warheads, if one adds the intermediate and tactical weapons that they possess. Those 50,000 nuclear warheads amount to more than 1·5 million Hiroshima-size atomic bombs. If those arsenals of nuclear weapons were ever used there would be an eternity of nuclear winter.

Yet neither side has gained one jot in its security by pursuing this arms race during the past 40 years. Both have wasted colossal sums of money which would have been far better spent on improving the lot of their peoples and, indeed, the lot of the world.

So far, the stability of the nuclear balance between Russia and the United States has proved invulnerable to wide variations in their relative capabilities. It is now universally recognised, even by Mr. Richard Perle of the Pentagon, that there is broad parity in strategic nuclear weapons between the Soviet Union and the United States. For this reason deliberate aggression by one or the other is well nigh inconceivable at the moment.

However, the colossal size of their existing arsenals has encouraged both Governments to think more and more about the possibility not just of deterring but of fighting a nuclear war. Each suspects the other of hoping to win a nuclear conflict if it can destroy sufficient of the enemy's retaliatory forces in a first strike, so that each side is also thinking about pre-empting an enemy first stike. Mr.

Richard de Lauer, the Pentagon's chief of engineering, recently recommended the Trident D5 missile to Congress on the ground that it was a counterforce weapon which might give the United States a pre-emptive capacity. That is the weapon that the British Government are planning to buy at colossal cost from the United States for Britain's forces.

The Soviet Union and the United States are developing, and beginning to deploy in some cases, two or three new inter-continental ballistic missiles, new strategic nuclear bombers, new air-launched cruise missiles and new missile-carrying submarines. The United States is planning to replace its obsolete nuclear weapons in Europe with new nuclear missiles and artillery warheads, and no doubt the Soviet Union is doing the same.

Fears on both sides of a first strike are bound to increase rapidly if these developments continue. A report of the recently published unclassified version of the latest CIA national intelligence estimate stated that Soviet air defences would not be able to

"prevent large-scale damage to the USSR"

by United States nuclear bombers and cruise missiles for at least the next decade — that is bombers and cruise missiles alone. More important, Trident D5 is said to offer the United States for the 1990s the capacity to destroy 95 per cent. of Soviet inter-continental ballistic missiles if it strikes first. The same CIA assessment reports that, at least until the year 2000, Russia could pose "no significant threat" to American atomic submarines.

Those figures from American sources take no account of the enormous destructive power of America's ICBM force, which is based on land. In addition, President Reagan is planning to equip the United States with a ballistic missile defence, through his star wars programme, and is inviting the Soviet Union to follow suit. He told a BBC correspondent that his message to the Soviet Union was:

"We wish you well with your defence plans."

That is a different story from what the Foreign Secretary told us today and the President could have fooled me, because a welcome and goodwill for the Soviets' ballistic missile plans are the last views I have heard from Secretary Weinberger or Mr. Shultz.

President Reagan's personal attitude to star wars has not wavered since he first made a speech recommending it in March 1983, when he said:

"The human spirit must be capable of rising above dealing with other nations and human beings by threatening their existence."

The President said that he was determined

"to find a way of defence which will make nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete."

Bruce Kent and Joan Ruddock could not have put the case for nuclear disarmament more forcibly. The President added that if

"defensive systems were paired with offensive systems they could be viewed as fostering an aggressive policy — and nobody wants that."

The tragedy is that that is exactly what the President's star wars programme is leading to. When the President made his speech in March 1983, nearly all the experts in the United States believed that it was nonsense, but when he made it clear in the following months that he was not to be shaken, they all switched round. In fact, there has never been such a mass conversion since a Chinese general baptised his troops with a hose.

Today, no one who is involved in the star wars programme shares President Reagan's view of it — not General Abrahamson, who is in charge of the whole project, not Dr. Yonas, who is the chief scientific adviser to the programme, and not Dr. Keyworth, who is the President's chief scientific adviser.

The State Department's official pamphlet on star wars, published a few months ago, said that the project is designed not to replace nuclear deterrence, but to enhance it. In other words, it is designed to threaten the existence of other nations and human beings more credibly. Its purpose is not to make nuclear weapons obsolete or to give the peoples of the world immunity from nuclear attack; its purpose, as has been well described in speeches by Dr. Keyworth and in a speech by Dr. Yonas that I heard in Ottawa recently, is to protect America's land-based missiles, rather than to protect the American people. For that reason, it is bound to accelerate the arms race in both offensive and defensive systems and will lead exactly to the consequence against which President Reagan warned in his speech two and a half years ago. It will also lead to a situation in which, to use the recent words of Mr. Nitze, the

"growth of defences could support rather than discourage a first strike."

That is why the star wars programme has been publicly opposed by the last three American Presidents — by Republican Presidents Ford and Nixon no less than by the Democrat President Carter — and by at least three of the last four American Defence Secretaries — by Republican Secretary Schlesinger no less than by Democrat Secretaries Brown and McNamara. In fact, the SDI programme in the United States is supported only by those who reject arms control in principle, such as Dr. Weinberger and Mr. Perle, and, of course, by those who cynically hope to get a lot of money out of it. As the House knows, star wars is described by the military and industrial community in the United States as pennies from heaven.

The President is sticking doggedly to his original vision, but he is alone. In spite of his words on the BBC, no one really believes that President Reagan's successor — it will not be a decision for the present President — will give the Soviet Union the secrets of the star wars programme if it turns out to work. After all, only the other day the American Administration forced the British Customs and Excise to take a child's computer off the shelves of the duty-free shop at Heathrow because it might find its way to the Soviet Union.

Indeed, both American law and the ABM treaty forbid the United States to give information about ballistic missile defences even to its allies, including the United Kingdom. That fact casts an odd light on the idea of the Secretary of State for Defence that British firms could get great benefits from doing research for the United States into the SDI programme.

President Reagan told Soviet journalists last week that he would not deploy star wars until both sides had destroyed their offensive weapons, but on the very next day he was forced by his advisers to withdraw that undertaking. He then went to the other extreme and said that the United States would deploy star wars unilaterally if it could not get other world leaders to agree to an international system of defence against nuclear missiles. So much for the undertakings that the President gave to our Prime Minister in December. He now tells us not that he will consult or negotiate about deployment, but that if it proves feasible he will deploy unilaterally unless everybody else in the world agrees with him.

[Mr. Denis Healey]

The European allies had grave misgivings about the star wars programme from the word go. Those misgivings were superbly listed by the Foreign Secretary in the speech to which he referred earlier and for which, I am told—I hope that I am wrong — the Prime Minister later apologised to President Reagan. If that is not true, I hope that we may be told so. The Foreign Secretary does not rise to respond to that challenge.

The tragedy is that the European allies did not make their position crystal clear in time. On the contrary, the Washington correspondent of *The Sunday Times* and *The Guardian* told us from American sources in September that the Prime Minister had used her support for SDI to try to get President Reagan's support for buying the Ptarmigan project and threatened to withdraw her support for SDI if she did not get the Ptarmigan contract. The House will agree that *The Times* showed unusual innocence recently in asking why President Reagan delayed until this week publishing the decision, which must have been taken long ago, to buy the French system instead, even though President Mitterrand has openly opposed the star wars programme from the start.

Of course, the reason for the delay is obvious. The President wanted to be sure that he had our Prime Minister in the bag at the NATO meeting before he announced his decision. He took her for a ride. She gained nothing by sucking up to President Reagan except to explode the myth of a special relationship with the United States. Her only reward was another spillage of rancid bile from the Prince of Darkness, Mr. Richard Perle, who, according to *The Sunday Times* last week, accused her of following Baldwin and Chamberlain in appeasing the Soviet Union. He did so because she had dared to question Mr. Perle's propaganda about certain alleged Soviet violations of the ABM treaty.

I agree with the Foreign Secretary that it is still possible for America's European allies to exert a decisive influence on American policy in this area, provided that they are united and honest on a clear policy. There is always a power battle in Washington between the White House, the State Department, the Pentagon and various parts of the Congress about almost every element of American foreign and defence policy. That power battle can be swung in Europe's direction provided that Europe makes its views known in time. The best example of that was when united European pressure on the American Administration gave victory to Mr. Shultz over Mr. Weinberger on the interpretation of the ABM treaty on testing. I congratulate the Foreign Secretary on the part that he must have played in mobilising European support for that interpretation.

I strongly support the Foreign Secretary's view — I have said so many times — that a collective European approach to the defence and diplomatic problems facing the Alliance is essential if we are to proceed in the direction of peace rather than war. It is important that Europe should constitute an independent pillar within the Alliance. I shall devote my remaining remarks to what Britain and Europe should be pressing the United States for in relation to the arms talks and the forthcoming summit.

The greatest danger of the arms race lies in the quality of the new weapons being planned rather than in the quantity of the old weapons. By far the best objective in the arms talks would be to seek a freeze on the testing, development and deployment of new nuclear weapons. A nuclear freeze already has overwhelming popular support on both sides of the Atlantic as well as almost unanimous support in the United Nations.

Of course, a freeze is not without its own difficulties. There is a problem in deciding the point at which one cuts off programmes already under way. I believe that, since the two sides enjoy rough parity, that problem should not be difficult to overcome. Certainly it would be much easier to negotiate a freeze than a reduction in existing weapons when the pattern of the two sides' deterrence is so different. Moreover, a freeze would be much easier to verify than a reduction in forces because it is easier to tell whether a new weapon is being tested than to know whether a weapon photographed by satellite is within a permitted ceiling.

The Prime Minister has made a great deal in the House of saying that it is not possible to verify a ban on research. She said that again the other day. That is true in relation to research in brains or in laboratories, but it is possible to verify a ban on the external testing associated with research, especially since public sources tell us that western satellite intelligence photography has a resolving power which enables its possessor positively to identify objects as small as 150 cms. across.

The United States Defence Department has already published a list of the tests that it plans to carry out as part of its SDI research programme, because it knows that Russia can and will observe them. Surely our objective, which we should press on our European allies to press on the United States, should be to tighten the ABM treaty so as to ban all tests relating to space defence — on both sides. That would kill not only the SDI before its birth but the possibility of a Soviet breakout.

I agree with the Foreign Secretary that the Russians have indulged in a great deal of activity in space defence in the last 15 years, but none of that activity could come to fruition in a new space defence system if tests were banned now.

If one seeks a ban on observable tests relating to SDI, one must also ban the development of anti-satellite systems on both sides. I remember Mr. Richard Burt, when he was still working at the State Department last December, saying that the United States would be proposing such a ban. However, the United States has not put forward such a proposal and Mr. Burt is now ambassador in Bonn. One can only guess at the new American policy.

Surely the United States has a major interest in banning anti-satellite systems now because it claims that the Soviet Union is ahead. Indeed, as the Foreign Secretary said, the Soviet Union is the only country which has a working ASAT system, although I believe it is a primitive one. Moreover, nothing would be more dangerous than for each side to acquire the ability to rob the other of its eyes and ears in a crisis. Dr. Keyworth, the President's main scientific adviser, pointed out the other day that if America develops an anti-satellite system it will enable it to test its technologies for each of the three layers of space defence. If we do not reach agreement on a ban on anti-satellite activity now it will soon become very difficult to verify because the Americans plan to carry their anti-satellite weapons on F15 aircraft. They will be difficult to detect by what the Russians call "national means", satellite photography.

By far the most important single contribution to a freeze would be a comprehensive test ban treaty. No one would deploy new nuclear weapons if they had never been tested in real life. It is only three years since the Prime Minister told us that negotiations for a comprehensive test ban treaty were going, alas, far too slowly and should be speeded up and completed. I hope that the Minister can assure us that the Government are now pressing for a reconvening of the conference for a CTBT because it would command overwhelming support in the rest of the world. The non-proliferation treaty review conference in Geneva the other day called upon the nuclear powers to start negotiations for a comprehensive test ban in the next six weeks—before the end of the year.

The only excuse offered for not proceeding to the signature of a comprehensive test ban treaty is the alleged inability of science to detect very small underground tests. However, this week's issue of *Modern Geology* contains a long article by the leading British seismologist, Dr. Leggett of Imperial college, in which he demonstrates that there is no chance of the Soviet Union successfully evading detection if it breaks a comprehensive test ban. That chance has been further reduced since that article was written by the fact that in the last few days India, Sweden and four other neutral countries have agreed to make their territories available for monitoring a comprehensive test ban and to man seismological stations in the Soviet Union — which in principle the Soviet Union has already agreed to accept as part of a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Another contribution which Britain could make, especially since the United States believes that the phased array radar at Krasnoyarsk is intended to control a ballistic missile system, is to take up the Soviet offer to stop the development at Krasnoyarsk in return for stopping work to produce a phased array radar at Fylingdales and at Thule in Danish territory.

If the American Government are worried about Krasnoyarsk, here is an opportunity to get rid of both. There is no question that if such phased array radars, whether in the Soviet Union, Britain or Greenland, were used as battle management stations for ballistic missile defence, they would be a flagrant violation of the anti-ballistic missile treaty. I suggest that the Foreign Secretary should immediately approach the United States and say that we insist that the United States should negotiate on the Soviet offer to stop development in Krasnoyarsk in return for stopping development at Fylingdales and Thule, and will refuse to proceed with the development until and unless such negotiations begin.

The correspondent for *The Times* in Washington reported last week that diplomats and politicians are asking two questions about President Reagan. Can he cope? Does he know what he wants? The second question is unfair. He knows exactly what he wants from the star wars system, and he described his desires eloquently in his interview with the BBC. The trouble is that nobody believes that what he wants is attainable. He has been deceived by his advisers on star wars as he was deceived by those who told him that there is no word in the Russian language for freedom. That is another remark that he made in his BBC broadcast. Those who share his yearning, as I hope all of us in the House do, to base the security of the human race on something other than mutually assured destruction know that star wars is not the answer. To pursue the star wars mirage means only an accelerating arms race in both offensive and defensive nuclear weapons.

The truth lies elsewhere. We need a freeze on all new nuclear weapons as the basis of our negotiation on the more complex but less urgent task of reducing the number of existing weapons. I agree with what I hope the Foreign Secretary implied, that that task, at least in Europe, could be achieved quite quickly, certainly if the British and French Governments would agree to let their forces be counted in the balance.

I regret that the Prime Minister, as the Foreign Secretary told us, has refused to talk directly to the Soviet Union about British weapons, but I welcome the fact that she has agreed to let the Foreign Secretary talk to Mr. Shevardnadze about wider aspects of disarmament on a bilateral basis. I am asking the British Government to take a lead in bringing the world back to sanity, to halt and reverse the nuclear arms race and to offer us a future to which out children can look forward with hope rather than with despair.

10.44 am

Mr. Reg Prentice (Daventry): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary on the speech with which he opened this debate and, if I may venture to do so, on the continued excellence of his work as Foreign Secretary. The country owes him a great debt. I particularly appreciate, and I think the House will appreciate, his analysis of the situation leading up to the imminent meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev.

For old times' sake I should have liked to congratulate the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) on his speech, but I am afraid that I cannot do so. For more than a quarter of a century I have had the experience of listening to him speak from the Opposition Dispatch Box—that is, in the intervals when he was not in government and behaving differently — during his long, painstaking search for the office of Foreign Secretary, which must seem more remote as time goes on. The right hon. Gentleman's speeches are getting worse. Every speech —and this is particularly true of the one that we heard this morning — is preceded by an exhaustive and exhausting trawl for every detail, every statistic and every quotation—given out of context—and every varying nuance of meaning that he can discover between spokesmen in one department in Washington and another. That is all intended to add up to a niggling criticism of President Reagan and to be yet one more bid on his part to gain some support from the members of the Labour party, who are becoming more infected by anti-Americanism.

I listened with fascination to a quotation from some learned journal on geology, and I listened in vain, as did the House, for any message of support and good will for the President of the United States, who enters these very difficult discussions representing not only the United States but the Western democratic world in general. In this role, President Reagan deserves a message of support and encouragement from all of us in the House. This does not preclude detailed criticism here and there, but the general good will that we owe him as the leader of the Western world, and the respect that we owe him for the way in which he proclaims the values of the Western world, should come loud and clear from the House in this debate. There was not a murmur of that from the right hon. Gentleman.

[Mr. Reg Prentice]

I listened in vain for any reference to the problems of sub-Saharan Africa and the relevance of the British overseas aid programme. If the right hon. Gentleman had spoken about that, I would have been prepared to forgive him for the many conflicts that I had with him when I was Minister for Overseas Development and he was Chancellor of the Exchequer. During that time he was trying to reduce the Labour Government's inadequate aid programme, but was not allowed to do so by his Cabinet colleagues.

Other hon. Members on the Labour Front Bench, including the Leader of the Opposition, have been trying to make a party political argument out of the overseas aid programme. I can look back over many years of arguing for a better British aid programme, which has never been good enough, under either Labour or Conservative Governments, and is not good enough now.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Perhaps that is why the right hon. Gentleman joined the Tory party —on account of its wonderful concern for the poor of the Third world.

Mr. Prentice: My reasons for joining the Conservative party go wider than this debate and have often been stated, but I am prepared to state them again. I believe that Governments of both parties have failed to measure up to events, but I think that those who care about these issues have more respect for the Conservative Government, who have never promised to reach the United Nations target, than they have for the Labour party, which has always promised to do so in opposition, but has always moved away from it in practice. We should reach the United Nations target.

The House is in an unfortunate position during the debate on the Queen's Speech, not simply today, but all next week, because while we are discussing the Government's programme for the coming Session, we are told in the newspapers that the Government have been completing their review of public expenditure. We are led to believe that that was finished yesterday morning and that there will be a statement early next week.

The shape and size of every major programme with which we are concerned will be determined by the figures in that review, yet the House will have to discuss housing, education, law and order and many other issues, including the overseas aid programme, without the basic facts. That is a pity. The matter should be the subject of discussion through the usual channels in future years, so that when we look at all the programmes for the coming year in the context of the Queen's Speech debate it can be a more informed debate because hon. Members have the figures.

Public expenditure rumours keep coming into the Chamber, more or less in the role of Banquo's ghost. That is not satisfactory. If I am to believe the newspapers—I always try to—about a week ago, an argument was going on between my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development, who wanted an increase compared with the figure that had been projected for 1986-87, and the Treasury Ministers, who, I read in the newspapers, wanted to cut it. The more recent rumours are that there is to be no cut, but a modest increase. I hope that that is so. My argument still is that we should be doing significantly more. When I say "we", I mean Britain as well as every other country in the Community and the Western world generally, as well as in the northern hemisphere, because the Soviet bloc's record in that regard is pitiful.

I do not want to repeat the standard arguments which I and many other hon. Members have often stated in the House. I want to make one simple point. I believe that the tragic situation that has developed in sub-Saharan Africa adds a new dimension to the problem. Increasing numbers of people who have always lived in a state of malnutrition are now suffering acute starvation, or are on the edge of it. Many reasons for that have developed in recent years —the succession of droughts, the advance of the desert into lands that were once cultivated, the increase in population, the mistakes, sometimes criminal, of some of the Governments of that region, the civil war in Ethiopia, and so on. That has presented the world community with a challenge that is much larger and on a different scale from anything that we envisaged a couple of years ago.

This morning I was interested to hear the statement by the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation that the rains had made an improvement for the moment in some of those countries, but only some. Some are off the danger list of imminent starvation, but others are still very much on it. The point is that they are all very vulnerable. That state of affairs will continue for many years, and may get worse rather than better. From time to time we are likely to have to send in massive amounts of food aid, accompanied by medicines and other forms of emergency aid. We shall have to do much more in long-term develoment aid.

Within the aid programme, a contingency sum has always been set aside every year to help with emergencies. That has been fair enough for a temporary emergency such as an earthquake, the outbreak of civil war or a particularly bad drought. We send relief, and the contingency fund is in the programme for that reason. However, when we are dealing with a situation of this size and duration, that cannot be the real answer. If it has to be dealt with within a programme that is not increased, that means that this year, next year and in the years to come we shall be giving extra help in Ethiopia or the Sudan at the expense perhaps of India or Bangladesh. That is not good enough. I cannot guess what the public expenditure figures will be, but there should be a significant increase at least to recognise that new challenge.

There is also a new dimension in public awareness in Britain. The television programmes that showed children starving caused a shock wave in public opinion. As a result Bob Geldof and his friends have received a magnificent response for the great efforts that they have made and are still making. It did not start with Bob Geldof. I am sure that every hon. Member had this experience. In my constituency there were fund-raising efforts after those television programmes, by schools, youth groups, churches, women's institutes and specially formed village action groups, which raised a great deal of money. They properly wrote to me and said that the Government must do more. They are also doing something more significant. Many of those people are continuing to study the problem in depth. They recognise that it is a question, not just of emergency help, but of long-term development, and that we should not help east Africa at the expense of countries such as Bangladesh. They are prepared to continue fund raising, but they will also continue to demand of us a bigger response.

Those events have touched a sensitive nerve. Therefore, I say to my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench that, much as I support in general the strategy of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the need for public spending restraint, I believe that there is a moral imperative in the aid programme that makes it unique, and that the people of this country are entitled to look to the Government and all political parties in the House for a bigger continuing commitment than we ever achieved in the past.

10.57 am

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): The subject of today's debate is foreign affairs, but, as right hon. and hon. Members will appreciate, I wish to say a fair bit about what the Gracious Speech means for Scotland. However, therein lies my first point. There is so little about Scotland in the Gracious Speech that we might as well be a foreign country.

On Wednesday, I heard the Prime Minister congratulating her hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) on his speech, and I join her in those congratulations. When I heard her referring to his constituency as being in the far north, that made me wonder whether she thinks about my constituency; if ever it crosses her mind, she must imagine that we go about our business with teams of huskies. Little consideration is being given to the problems facing Scotland.

The Government give a false impression when they talk of maintaining a substantial aid programme, because our aid programme compares poorly with that of many other developed countries. It has been cut substantially in the recent past. Without a sustained attack on world poverty and famine by the countries of the northern hemisphere and more long-term development programmes, disasters, famines and other tragedies will crop up again and again, and the Government's performance so far has been deplorably inadequate. I agree with the right hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice) that the Labour Government's record has little to recommend it, although it was much better than the present Government's record.

In spite of the present difficulties of the United Kingdom, in world terms we are a relatively wealthy country and should be doing much more for the developing nations than we have done in the past under Labour or Conservative Governments.

The Foreign Secretary referred to the closer political unity of the EEC and mentioned several factors which make that desirable, but he omitted to refer to the other side of the account, which is that it can be accompanied only by further erosion of national sovereignty. The United Kingdom will learn about that in due course.

With regard to the accession of Spain and Portugal to the EEC, I have grave misgivings in one regard—the threat that it may pose to the Scottish fishing industry. The fishing fleets of those countries are in total greater than all the fishing fleets of the rest of the EEC. Naturally, I hope that the Government will get the best possible deal for our fishermen, but on past performance the chances are remote.

Fishing is no longer of great importance in England, so it is of no great importance to the Government when they reach the EEC bargaining table. In any case, whatever deals are made, there is also a crying need for better policing and inspection. Up to the present, the policing in our waters has been too often a joke. We need drastic action if our waters are not to be plundered by the new fleets from the Mediterranean countries.

I am disappointed that nothing was said in the Gracious Speech about the Government's attitude towards renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement. It is of tremendous importance to the textile and clothing industries that the arrangement should be renewed. There is a great fear in those industries that the Government are adopting a weaker position in the present negotiations. I hope that that will prove to be mistaken.

I am disappointed to see so little reference in the Gracious Speech to the problems of unemployment, especially in relation to Scotland, where, according to the most recent figures, it is still rising.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): I was interested in what the right Gentleman said about the multi-fibre arrangement. He seemed to be anxious that no more textiles from overseas should be admitted to Britain than is necessary. How does he square his rather hard-line view on that with what he says about overseas aid?

Mr. Stewart: I do not think that it will improve the position of overseas countries, in so far as we are able to help them, if we are to impoverish ourselves even further by not renewing the multi-fibre arrangement. I find nothing conflicting in my remarks. The Government preach that we must stand on our own feet, look after ourselves and then dispense any charity that is available. Indeed, the Prime Minister actually corrupted the story of the Good Samaritan by suggesting that he was able to help only because he happened to be well-heeled, and that he would not have been able to do so otherwise. Perhaps the Prime Minister should answer the Minister's question.

There appears to be more space in the Gracious Speech devoted to salmon fishing and the prevention of poaching in Scotland than to unemployment in Scotland. I heard some of the Conservative troglodytes growling with approval when that part of the Gracious Speech was read. "This is the way," they thought. "Deal with the poaching of salmon. That is the way to get to grips with the problems that face the United Kingdom".

The continuing commitment in the Gracious Speech to controlling public expenditure means that we can have little hope of the many full-time jobs that need to be created. Indeed, public expenditure cuts dominate the speech. The references to them are often couched in Orwellian newspeak, but the meaning is clear. The speech refers to

"Measures . . . to reform the operation of the Wages Councils".

It also refers to reforming social security and to legislation "to facilitate funding by the industry of agricultural research, advice and related services".

That manipulation of the English language could have sinister connotations were it not for the fact that the record is clear. We all know what it means. The code can be deciphered by all. The Government cannot get away with it. All the measures mean cuts, and the Government cannot hide behind the rhetoric.

I am also disturbed by the Government's determination to push through a Bill to remove statutory restrictions on shop opening hours, particularly on Sunday. Like other hon. Members, I received a letter in my mail today which mentions individuals, organisations, churches and other

[Mr. Stewart]

bodies opposed to the change in Sunday shopping hours. I shall not read them all but we should take note of some of them. The list answers the propaganda that there is widespread demand for Sunday trading. No such demand exists; I entirely refute the claim. It is sometimes claimed that Scotland has this freedom, but there is no basis whatever for the claim. The Secretary of State for Scotland said yesterday that it is the exception to find shops open in Scotland on Sunday. There is no basis for that propaganda.

Bodies opposed to the measure include the Association of Independent Retailers, the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union, the British Council of Churches, the British Hardware Federation, the British Independent Grocers Association, the Catholic Bishops' Conference, the Church of England, the Co-operative Union Ltd, the Drapers Chamber of Trade, G. A. Dunn and Company, the Evangelical Alliance, the Free Church Federal Council, the Free Church of Scotland, the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Independent Footwear Retailers' Association, the John Lewis Partnership, John Menzies plc, the Multiple Shoe Retailers Association, the National Chamber of Trade and the National Federation of Meat Traders.

The list is endless. Having read it, I am wondering who on earth is in favour of the measure, apart from the Government. There does not seem to be any evidence that it is required in any way. The only basis for it is commercial greed. The Tory party wants to have the reputation, certainly in Scotland, of being far more solicitous than the Labour party with regard to Sunday observance but, now that money talks, the fourth commandment has to go.

It was suggested yesterday from the Conservative Benches that the question should be left to local authorities. I am interested in the view that the Government should now return some decision making to local authorities. It is against the recent trend of the Government's thinking. I am opposed to leaving the question to the decision of local authorities. The decision should be made in this House. I commend those Conservative Members who have said that they are prepared to oppose the Government on this type of legislation.

I welcome the reference in the Gracious Speech to drug peddling. It is a problem that concerns all parties in the House as well as the nation.

I welcome what has been promised on improving law and order but it would be a gross confidence trick if the Conservative Government, in the light of what has happened since they came into office, were to pretend to be the only party in this House concerned with law and order. That pretence could backfire on them. The point was dealt with yesterday in an excellent speech by the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan).

In passing, I commend the Home Secretary for the pronouncements that he has made to date. I believe that in his new office he is acting in a firm and civilised manner.

I note with some wry interest the Government's commitment to

"seek widely acceptable arrangements for the devolution of power"

in Northern Ireland. They seek to impose on Northern Ireland something that the majority of the people of Northern Ireland do not want. In Scotland, most people want a Scottish Parliament. As many as 29 per cent. want a completely independent Parliament, and 44 per cent. want an Assembly with substantial powers. That expression of view has been ignored, just as the majority vote for the Scotland Act 1978 was ignored. At that time, the Prime Minister and Lord Home promised to produce a better Bill for devolution in Scotland. We are still waiting for it, just as we are still waiting for the new Bill on rating in Scotland. The growing strength of the movement for Scottish government is a factor that the Government, and any future Government, will ignore at their peril.

11.10 am

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): I have recently had the good fortune to visit three countries in the far east, and I want to say a few words about each. The first country was Japan, and the most important question in our relations with that country concerns the measures that Japan is taking in an attempt to reduce its vast trading surpluses with the remainder of the world.

The measures take three forms—liberalisation of the barriers to imports, stimulation of demand and raising and sustaining the value of the yen. I have no doubt that the Japanese Government intend to make the measures effective. I cannot judge whether they are sufficiently ambitious, but I have two doubts about whether they will be successful. Indeed, some of the Japanese to whom I spoke shared my doubts.

The first doubt is whether it will be possible to change the habitual practice of so many Japanese business men to buy Japanese without studying what is available from overseas — unless, of course, nothing Japanese is available. The second doubt is whether it will be possible to sustain the value of the yen—the most important of the three measures—in view of the enormous demand for Japanese funds from America. The financial flows from Japan to America during the past 12 months amounted to $40 billion, which is equal to Japan's trade surplus with America.

Whatever may be the validity of those doubts, it is important that Japan's measures to reduce its trade surpluses with the free world countries should indeed be successful; otherwise we will be faced with ever-increasing demands for protectionism in the United States Congress, which will have implications not only for economic relations in the free world, but for our political cohesion. This House should make it clear that it believes that it is important that Japan should succeed in its efforts.

The second country I visited was China, where the results of the liberalisation measures since 1979 are becoming evident. I visited a farming township, which not long ago would have been called a farming commune, where the average income per worker has doubled during the past five years—admittedly from a low base—owing to the new incentive and liberalisation measures.

It is more difficult in an urban environment to apply incentives, but the Chinese are making efforts to introduce them more and more into the factories, and the results are becoming apparent there too. Indeed, these results and the enthusiasm shown by the Chinese for the changes are such that it is extremely unlikely that the new liberalisation tendency will be reversed. If there were any strength

behind a desire for a reversal, I think that the memories of the horrors of the cultural revolution, which are fresh in the minds of many people, would be an effective barrier.

China wants to learn how an incentive-based economic system works, it wants to trade with the outside world and especially the free world and it wants joint ventures. This open door policy provides great opportunities to foreign business men, and especially to British business men because of the good will between China and the United Kingdom generated by the agreement on Hong Kong.

The Chinese market is undoubtedly difficult to enter for a business man who does not already know it. My advice to potential British exporters or those interested in joint ventures is to find someone who knows the China market. There is no better place to find someone to give that advice than Hong Kong, the third country that I visited.

Despite the agreement between the United Kingdom and China, there is still concern in Hong Kong about the future after 1997. I believe that that concern will steadily diminish as practical arrangements are made between the British and Chinese Governments on the various matters covered in the joint declaration and agreement.

There have been two recent examples. The first was an agreement in the Land Commission about the amount of land to be released in the coming 12 months, which was reached in a cordial and rapid manner. The second agreement was within the joint liaison group about Hong Kong's position in the Asian Development bank.

As I have just hinted, the importance of capitalist Hong Kong to China will become ever more obvious. We used to say that Hong Kong's value lay principally in its being a source of foreign exchange with China. Although that is still true to some extent, it is becoming more and more clear that Hong Kong is China's best source for technology.

One of the problems still debated in Hong Kong is whether—and if so, how fast—progress should be made towards more representative government. I was in Hong Kong when the new legislative council was inaugurated in its new building. It was a landmark in the direction of representative government. For the first time, it contains elected members. I believe that further constitutional development should be undertaken with caution. If it is too fast, it could damage the stability and prosperity of Hong Kong, which would not happen if we proceeded with caution.

I have mentioned three countries, two of which—Japan and Hong Kong—are success stories, not simply by Asian standards but by world standards. They are free enterprise countries. The third country, China, is engaged in a difficult struggle towards greater incentives and more economic success, following the agonising period of rigid state control and state ownership.

Would it not be a good idea if the Labour party sent a high-powered delegation to those three countries to study their respective economic systems? Perhaps then the Labour party might learn a thing or two.

11.17 am

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): I shall not follow the right hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) and speak about the far east, for the very good reason that I am not sufficiently well informed to speak with any authority. I have an old-fashioned prejudice against people who shoot off their mouths on subjects about which they do not know a great deal.

I shall devote my remarks to the middle east, an area of which I have been a deep student and in which I have travelled widely throughout the greater part of my adult life. I begin with a general observation, which is that to my mind almost all the discussion about the middle east, in this Chamber and elsewhere, is bedevilled by the fact that it takes place on much too narrow a front.

People talk about the middle east as though all its problems flow from the southern half of the littoral of the eastern Mediterranean. The countries of the whole area, from the Atlantic coast to Morocco to the border between Pakistan and India, are characterised by a great interweaving of relations and a great interlocking of interests and conflicts. One cannot look at any one part of the area in isolation. That includes the Arab world, Israel and the four contiguous, large and important non-Arab Moslem countries of Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan and Turkey.

I become fed up with those whose only attitude to the middle east is to say, "If we could only get rid of the argument between Israel and its neighbours, everything in that great garden would be lovely and there would be no problems. The whole of that Arab world would be a haven of peaceful development." That is not true. What would happen if it were possible to wave a magic wand, as a few would like to do, including one or two in this place, to ensure that Israel disappeared overnight? If that happened, there would still be the great dangers that are inherent in the rivalry in the area between the two super-powers. There would still remain the great dangers that are involved in the frantic Soviet search for naval bases in the Mediterranean, the Red sea, the Indian ocean and around the Horn of Africa, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) rightly described as the most immediate threat to world peace.

If Israel disappeared overnight, there would still be great problems arising out of the instability of the Governments of all the Moslem states. No respectable betting man would put a single coin on the certainty that any one of the Governments of the Moslem states will still be in office in three years' time. Perhaps that is partly because not one of them is a genuine pluralist parliamentary democracy. It is perhaps partly because 12 of those Government came to power by military acts of violence. Those who come in by the sword often go out by it in many parts of the world.

There are rivalries between the Moslem states. There is the enmity between Syria and Jordan. There is the full funny old relationship between Syria and the Lebanon. There is the quarrel between Syria and Egypt, as well as the quarrels between Egypt and Libya and between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus and the projected mineral deposits in the Aegean. All those conflicts would remain if Israel disappeared.

There are rival territorial claims between Saudi Arabia and Oman. There is the war between Iran and Iraq. In the first of the two battles of Khoramshahr there were more killed in 36 hours than in all the five wars between Israel and its neighbours put together. Apparently that battle did not rate a line in our press. It did not rate a mention in the Chamber. The war continues and no one sees the end of it.

[Mr. Ian Mikardo]

There is a war between Morocco and Algeria in which Algeria is fighting with the Polisario front as its surrogate. That war has been going on for years and it would continue even if Israel disappeared overnight.

If Israel ceased to exist, there would still be a Soviet army in Afghanistan and a Libyan army in Chad. We must view the problems of Israel and its Arab neighbours against the background of the tremendously complicated relationships and the political and religious rivalries throughout the region. If one considers the Israel-Arab problem against that background, one can start to make a real assessment of the prospects of peace between Israel and its neighbours.

We all know that there are still many great obstacles in the path of peace, but there are some new factors that give cause for some encouragement and hope. To take the black side first, what are the main obstacles in the way of the peace process? The first, and perhaps the most serious in the long term, is the growth of religious fundamentalism. Islamic fundamentalism is best illustrated by the Iran-Iraq war, which is really a war between the Sunis and Shi'ites. A danger is posed by the Hebrew fundamentalists on the West bank. On the whole, they are rather less vicious than their Islamic counterparts, but they are still a considerable obstacle to peace.

The second obstacle to peace is Syria. It is not generally realised that Syria has a serious ambition to recreate Greater Syria. Syria looks upon the Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan as parts of Syria. Syria has never recognised the existence of the Lebanon. There has never been a Syrian embassy in Beirut and there has never been a Lebanese embassy in Damascus. Syria regards the Lebanon as the Lebanese province of Greater Syria. To the Syrians, Jordan is the Jordanian province of Greater Syria. When King Hussein lies tossing sleeplessly in bed at night, he is worrying about the Syrians and not the wicked Israelis. Syria has an equivocal attitude to the Palestinians because it looks upon Palestine as the Palestinian province of Greater Syria.

The third obstacle to peace is Israel's coalition Government. Those who think that it is a good idea to have some system of proportional representation that will avoid a one-party Government—there are some who think that it is better to have a Government in which more than one party is represented—could learn much from what is happening in Israel. The Government of that country has been struck by paralysis. It is clear that the peace process will not continue until the present Israel Government disappear and until Mr. Peres leads a Labour Administration.

The fourth great obstacle to peace is represented by the divisions within the PLO, which are doing great harm to the Palestinian cause. There are divisions in the leadership of the Palestinians, between PLO and non-PLO factions. There are dreadful divisions within the PLO itself. The PLO has adapted the double strategy which is known in Britain as the Armalite and the ballot box to become the hijack and the seat at the negotiating table. There is dreadful schizophrenia among the PLO about that and that is holding back the cause of the Palestinians in a way that they do not deserve. There is considerable danger that the PLO could become the OPL — not the Palestine Liberation Organisation but the Obstacle to Palestine Liberation.

As against all those difficulties and obstacles, there are some positive factors. There is a much greater will for peace among many Israelis. There has been a huge growth —I saw it with my own eyes a couple of weeks ago—in the numbers and effectiveness of the "Peace Now" movement. There is a growing understanding among circles in Israel which did not understand it before that territories that are held against the wishes of their peoples are liabilities, not assets, and could become grave liabilities. That conviction has been reinforced by the experience of the idiotic adventure in the Lebanon.

There is a greater will for peace among many Palestinians, especially on the West bank. I have talked to many of them and that is my clear impression. A local leadership is growing up which is becoming much more confident. These leaders are still a bit worried because they can get a bullet in the back at any time if they say something that the more extreme elements do not like. However, the leadership is becoming more confident and there are increasing signs that the people on the West bank want to continue to be allowed to till their fields and do not wish to be ruled by aliens. They want to get on quietly with their work and do not wish to give way to fanaticism of any sort.

I thought it significant that the President of Israel was able to do a "walkabout" around the West Bank unaccompanied by any security guard. He was able to talk to any and everybody. He is a good Arabic speaker. I thought it significant that in the last mayoral election in Jerusalem more Arabs voted for the Jew Teddy Kollek than had ever voted in previous elections for any Arab candidate when a large part of Jerusalem was occupied by Jordan.

The rapprochement between Egypt and Jordan is encouraging. So is the softening in the Soviet attitude, to which my right hon. Friend referred. I went with other members of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee to Moscow recently. We had an extended week as part of our study of UK-USSR relations. Towards the end of the week we had a second meeting with our opposite numbers, members of the foreign affairs commission of the supreme Soviet. They were a great deal more open and frank than they had been during our first meeting at the beginning of the week, which in itself was an encouraging sign.

At that second meeting, we put to the people on the Soviet side the argument that they were not acting in the best interests of their country by excluding themselves from the middle east peace process and by continuing to have no diplomatic relations with Israel. There are now signs of some moves in that direction. I should like to think that what we said to our opposite numbers in Moscow had some influence. It may or may not have done so. It may be merely that we were pushing at an already open door. We shall never know which is true. It does not matter which is. What does matter is that there are moves in that direction.

I wish to say a few words about what role, if any, this country has to play in the middle east peace process. I shall begin with a short historical preface. For centuries we were the dominant power in that part of the world. We successfully fought off attempts to replace us as the dominant power first by France, then by Germany, then by Turkey and then by Germany again.

Since 1945, we have thrown that position away, as a direct result of colossal blunders committed by five of our Foreign Secretaries — two Labour and three

Conservative. First, there was Ernest Bevin with his malevolent misjudgment of the position in Palestine immediately after 1945 which led him on a downward spiral of error until he reached the point where he was sending escapers from Nazi concentration camps back to the same camps and using a rather unwilling British Navy to enforce those moves.

Herbert Morrison then got himself into a mess in his negotiations with Mossadeq, who was then Prime Minister of Iran, with the result that our American allies, who love us so much, seized the opportunity to jump in and largely edge us out of the Gulf area, to their benefit and our disadvantage, to the benefit of their oil companies and to the disadvantage of British-owned oil companies.

Then there was Eden, who never understood the Arabs and who got it all wrong. That finally led him, when he was Prime Minister, into the hideous error of the Suez invasion in 1956.

There is a lesson for everyone who talks, as the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. Friend talked today, about creating a European foreign policy, as though it was an easy and tremendously good thing to do. The Foreign Secretary's predecessor, Lord Carrington, in the six months during which he had the chair of the European Community, thought that he would do something dramatic about the middle east. Lord Carrington believed that the one issue upon which he could most readily obtain agreement from his opposite numbers in western Europe would be the middle east. A conference was convened at Venice. The Prime Minister was very much involved in it all.

The conference produced the Venice declaration, which was hugely pro-Arab and pro-PLO. They expected that the Israelis would reject it, but they equally expected that the Arabs would welcome it and that the Palestinians would jump for joy. Predictably, within a couple of hours of the publication of the Venice declaration, the Israelis denounced it. Two hours later, the PLO denounced it in language much stronger than that used by the Israelis.

The then Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who was the best friend the Arabs ever had in the House, came to answer questions a couple of days later. He was a broken man. He was shattered. He had gone to all those lengths with the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister to create a great gift for his friends and they had not just looked the gift horse in the mouth; they had spat in the giver's eye. Everyone in the middle east saw that as a great joke. That great publicised effort finished in a dreadful flop and fiasco.

The last occasion was the joint Palestinian-Jordanian declaration, which my right hon. Friend called a diplomatic shambles. That is perhaps the understatement of the year. Anyone who knows the Palestinians could have told the Foreign Secretary that there was no chance that those two Palestinian gentlemen who came here would renounce the Palestinian covenant. They are members of the executive of an organisation which has a constitution —the Palestinian covenant. The Palestine covenant does not talk about the PLO coming to the negotiating table. It says that the only solution to the problem is out of the barrel of a gun. The PLO does not wish to negotiate with Israel. It wishes to drive all Israelis into the sea. Those men are bound by the covenant. To expect them to come here and denounce it would be like expecting a couple of us to go abroad for some talks and denounce the oath of allegiance to Her Majesty that we all take when we come into this place. That is binding upon us and the Palestinian covenant was binding upon them.

If we are to do anything, we must proceed modestly. We must be modestly conscious that, at best, we can play only a minor part on the middle east stage. We can go on to that stage only when we are invited by both sides. When we get on it, we had better walk delicately like a pedigree cat, rather than go charging around, as we have done up until now, like a bull in a china shop.

I hope that when those matters come before us at points of action, a good deal more thought, understanding and study of the area and its peoples will guide the actions of Her Majesty's Government than appears to have been the case until now.

11.40 am

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): I hope that the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) will forgive me if I do not deal with what he said about the middle east. I wish to return to the main theme of the debate. However, when the hon. Gentleman criticised some of the Moslem dictatorships in that part of the world, I was reminded of what was said when I was in Korea once by some young Korean university students—that it is very difficult to be a democrat on an empty stomach. I understand the wisdom of the hon. Gentleman's words of advice, that it is best in politics to adopt a low posture. Results are sometimes better achieved in that way than by the use of megaphone diplomacy.

The main theme of the debate is the forthcoming negotiations with the Soviet Union. First, I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary on his excellent review, and I join my right hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice) in congratulating him upon his stewardship at the Foreign Office. His low posture stewardship is producing results. In my speech I have to support what my right hon. and learned Friend said about providing help for the developing world.

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) did not help by running down our chief negotiator in his efforts to bring the nuclear arms race to a close. There ought to be unity, not disunity, when one enters into negotiations, but in his speech the right hon. Member for Leeds, East portrayed disunity.

During the opening stages of the debate the Prime Minister said that the President of the United States has given an undertaking that research into the strategic defence initiative will remain within the bounds of the ABM treaty. It is vital that this point should be stressed, because existing treaties are so important. I hope that the Soviet Union's extensive programme will similarly be included in the ABM treaty. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East did not say a word about this. However, it is vital that it should be included. I am glad that my right hon. and learned Friend underlined the Soviet Union's strategic defence initiative and laser research. It is vital that this is made clear to the public, otherwise people will be unable to see through the shallowness of some of the arguments that are being deployed, not only by the Opposition but by the Soviet Union.

I agree with the Prime Minister that a reaffirmation and strengthening of the ABM treaty would be a positive and commendable outcome of the summit. If it is pursued, I hope that the strategic defence initiative will create mutually assured security, and not what some people

[Sir Julian Ridsdale]

describe as mutually assured madness. I have attended three briefings by General Abrahamson, the leader of the United States SDI programme, and I attended a recent North Atlantic Assembly meeting in San Francisco. I am sure that, because of his successful leadership of the shuttle programme, he will be a good leader. Nevertheless, I hope that at the summit there will be an agreement not to proceed further than the ABM treaty will allow.

Nuclear negotiations are not enough. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary was right to speak about human rights and Afghanistan. Cannot agreement be reached, too, on chemical weapons? I underline my right hon. and learned Friend's point, that it is important to have a total, verifiable ban on chemical weapons. Yet how gloomy it is that during the last 10 years mutually balanced force reductions in Europe have made little progress. I make this point after touring this August the northern flank of NATO, our most important flank, and after taking into account the growing power of the Soviet navy, its powerful nuclear submarine force in the Barents sea and the formidable military landing craft capability of the Soviets in the Baltic. Those of us who have to face reality pay tribute to NATO, and especially to the lead that has been given by the United States during nearly four decades.

I have been a member of the North Atlantic Assembly for six years, and I am vice president of its political committee. The North Atlantic Assembly is the Parliament of NATO. If only NATO, or an equivalent organisation, with the United States playing its part, had been in existence in the 1930s, there would not have been a second world war.

I am concerned about the lack of support by the Labour party for NATO, and about the disparaging way in which the right hon. Member for Leeds, East turned upon the United States in his speech. When I entered the House in 1954, I remember that many Members on the Opposition Front Bench had been in the war cabinet with Winston Churchill and that they said, "We will never make the mistake of no support strength again." In my view, the Opposition are making that mistake again. It may be that this is because of their idealism, but they must face reality and wholeheartedly support the President of the United States in the vital negotiations that are now taking place.

I have just returned from a meeting of the North Atlantic Assembly in San Francisco. I was much impressed by the care shown by the United States to consult its allies, not only on the strategic defence initiative, but on all other issues. That is why NATO is so successful an alliance. One day of the conference was set aside to discuss Pacific affairs, the Japan-United States security pact. What NATO does in the Atlantic, this pact, in good measure, does in the Pacific. It is in our interests to see that a proper balance is kept between United States interests in the Pacific and in the Atlantic. In my view, this is being done, but we must realise the kind of pressures that there are in the United States to turn its eyes westwards to the Pacific. The Pacific basin is an enormous magnet. The United States is doing a great amount of trade in the Pacific, and has great defence and other interests in that region. However, to its credit the United States is saying that it will play its part in NATO as well as in the Pacific.

In this context, I underline the growing importance of Japan. This point was referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South. I would underline the growing strategic importance of Japan and the part that it is playing, not only in China and south-east Asia, but in the sub-continent. One of the most vital diplomatic moves in the last 15 years has been Japan's move towards Beijing. It has been made with the full co-operation of the United States and western Europe. Japan's economic success and the wealth that it has created has proved to be a far greater diplomatic weapon than merely military arms. We are preoccupied with the imbalance of trade with Japan, but the Japanese Government have signified their intention with several measures to try to ease the problem——

Mr. Mikardo: They have been saying that for 15 years.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: However, the most important matter is not the measures that they have said they will take directly to affect imports, but the help that they have said they will give to the developing world. The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar said rightly that such noises have been made for some years, but I hope that the Opposition will concentrate on what the Japanese Government have said now. They have introduced a vast programme of help for the developing world during the next eight years.

Anyone who has travelled in the Indian sub-continent and in Bangladesh, as I have recently, cannot help but be struck by the poverty there. One is also struck by the Japanese presence, not only in Bangladesh, but in the entire sub-continent. If Britain can join in joint ventures with Japan, it will benefit not only the developing world but this country. The fact that the Japanese will spend £80 billion during the next six years is a sign of their vast wealth and gives us some idea of the challenge that could be taken up. The programme could be of great help to countries such as Britain, which have a large imbalance of trade with Japan. The Americans are also interested in joining those ventures.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary was right to refer to the growing political and economic co-operation in Europe. If Europe can emulate the growth achieved by Japan, it will have a similar influence not only in the middle east but in Asia and the Indian sub-continent. That is why I welcome the appointment of Lord Pennock and Lord Cockfield to examine the causes of the lack of co-operation in creating a common industrial market in Europe. Only with a common industrial market will Europe have the depth of co-operation and economic base that can ensure the success of diplomacy.

The prospects for fruitful negotiations in Geneva must be on all our minds. I fear that, although the tone of the Soviets may have changed, their policies have not. I hope that I am wrong. It may be some time before we achieve positive results, but to achieve those results we must keep up our guard and build our strength. By that I mean that we must help the developing world and build our economic strength, because the thaw will come, not through arms alone, but through the challenge of our economic strength to Russia.

11.52 am

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): The debate gives me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Liberal

party on some of the great foreign issues of the day. The right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) said that Scotland was poorly treated in the Queen's Speech. He is lucky; Wales was not mentioned at all. As a Welsh Member of Parliament, I deprecate that. I trust that it was not the work of the Foreign Secretary, who is known to be proud of his Welsh heritage.

The world looks to the arms control negotiations in Geneva for a positive reduction in the nuclear weapons held by the Russians and the Americans. We hope that the negotiations will be successful. A heavy responsibility lies on President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev to ensure that common sense prevails at their summit meeting, and we wish them well in their task.

The record of recent years does not give rise to a great deal of hope. The deployment of SS20 missiles by the Russians and of cruise missiles by the Americans, and now the strategic defence initiative, with President Reagan in the van—all escalate the nuclear arms race—a race which makes the world a dangerous place in which to live. That applies to nations who possess nuclear weapons as much as to those who do not. I beg the House to realise that the democracies of western Europe are looking forward to progress in the talks. They hope for real reductions in nuclear weapons, and anything less will prove a grave disappointment. They will feel badly let down if no progress is made.

Britain still has a fund of good will in the world, and it is up to us to show a greater sense of leadership in these matters. It would be a step in the right direction to put some British nuclear weapons into the negotiations. Pious hopes are expressed in the Queen's Speech, but there are precious few signs of positive action.

The Government's record on South Africa leaves a great deal to be desired. The Prime Minister's visit to Nassau left us wondering what has happened to our moral authority in the world and the Commonwealth. South Africa, as ever, is a police state. In what other country could 15 per cent. of the population, who are white, dominate the other 85 per cent., who are black, because of the colour of their skin? Do we have to remind the Government that apartheid is an offence against mankind and strikes at family life because the migrant labour system denies freedom of movement through the pass laws, and strikes at individual liberty by disfranchisement on the basis of race? That is an indefensible system which is maintained only through fear, brutality and imprisonment.

It is 25 years since Sharpeville, but since then events in Soweto and the Cape and the recent massacre at Uitenhage bear testimony to a violently repressive regime. Try as Botha may, he is tinkering with an impossible task. Yet at Nassau Britain could not be persuaded to implement economic sanctions when real pressure for change would have brought results. We chickened out when the chips were down. We regret that decision, and the Government will come to regret it when the six months' grace given by the Commonwealth is up. We urge the Government to regain our moral leadership in the Commonwealth and to impose sanctions.

In the Queen's Speech we had hoped to see a strong statement of intent regarding South Africa—rather than the watered-down version that it contained—in an effort to bring about trust, freedom, democracy, liberty and justice to all that country's troubled people. We earnestly hope that in future we shall achieve that.

While in one part of the African continent races are divided through ignorance and prejudice, in another people have been starving to death. Famine, poverty and a lack of resources have contributed to the disaster in Ethiopia, Sudan and other countries affected by the recent droughts. The superb lobby of Parliament in October by members of the World Development Association campaigning against poverty and famine in the Third world have focused our attention on these acute problems. Voluntary bodies, Bob Geldof and Live Aid have galvanised the nation and shamed us into action.

Let us not forget that in an average year up to 1 million people in Ethiopia die from starvation—that is in an average year, not a year of famine. UNICEF estimates that, in 1978 alone, more than 12 million children under the age of 5 died in the Third world. Recent estimates put the figure at 15 million. The World bank estimates that 800 millon people are in a state of absolute starvation and despair.

What is the response of the British public when such enormous tragedies are translated to our television screens? We have only to remember the eyes of those appealing children looking through the camera lens while we sat in our comfortable homes. The great British public has responded generously to the sight of the root of Africa's starvation, but the Government have let our aid contribution fall to 0·33 per cent. of gross national product —far short of the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent.

In the meantime, in Europe, grain piles up in intervention stores. I am an agriculturist and see no rhyme or reason in our not sending grain immediately to where it is needed. If there is no transport, we must help provide it, and if there is no fuel, as was in the case in Sudan recently, we must provide that too.

In the longer term, we must provide the type of aid which will help to develop local agriculture in the poor countries of Africa, Asia and South America. Seed, fertiliser and simple tools can provide the basis for a better future. We should help them to help themselves. India has made enormous strides forward in the past 20 years and solved many of its food production problems, but the same cannot be said for Bangladesh.

By the end of the century, it could be possible for Africa to feed itself. Perhaps the most telling statistic that I have seen recently is that it costs $400 to transport 1 tonne of wheat to Africa, whereas for $200 a Third world farmer can be enabled to grow one tonne of wheat a year for the next 20 years himself. It is the quality, not just the quantity, of aid that counts.

I urge the Government to grasp the nettle and to commit themselves to what was not stated in the Queen's Speech —to meet Britain's United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product in aid to the Third world, and match the mood of this great nation.

12.2 pm

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): It is a pleasure to speak after the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey). I do not know whether he has assumed his party's foreign affairs portfolio or whether he is merely acting on behalf of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). Nevertheless, he has made a worthy translation from agriculture to foreign affairs.

A debate on foreign affairs provides a galaxy of choices but, like many others, I shall speak about East-West

[Mr. Peter Temple-Morris]

relations, as that is the major subject of the moment. I have no hesitation in wishing President Reagan well. I am pleased that he goes into these most important meetings with the West united behind him. I am addressing the House as a Back Bencher and I have wanted to say what I have to say about the Soviet Union and the United States for some time. It is our duty in foreign affairs debates to be as bipartisan and frank as possible.

I am not afraid to admit that, from the beginning, I have had profound misgivings about the strategic defence initiative. I would not pronounce such misgivings from the Front Bench but they must be expressed from the Back Benches on both sides of the House. I know that I am not alone in that respect. Moreover, such feelings are in no way anti-American. There is room for disagreement, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice) said. Although we support everything that the United States does in these talks, there is room for honest disagreement. Any point on which I might address the House has already been heard from various parties and interests, in the USA, including the Republican party and the Administration in Washington. If they can be frank in their exchanges, there is no earthly reason why we should not.

This is a unique opportunity to lay the foundations to limit the arms race. If the West or the Soviet Union fails in these negotiations, the effects will be profound. I for one will not be satisfied with a communiqué from Geneva about allowing more Aeroflot flights into New York. I understand that a few matters have already been quietly and privately agreed, but that is not sufficient. The nature of these talks makes it imperative that we achieve something. The West, and indeed the whole world, will be much poorer if we do not, so we are faced with a considerable responsibility. I am sure that the President of the United States has the best wishes of all hon. Members. With his massive mandate, he represents a strong second-term Administration. As a strong President with a mind of his own, he can make a major contribution to history and peace.

On the American side, the arms deficiencies of the post-Vietnam syndrome, Carter and the rest, have largely been made up. I know that some Americans disagree. However, we all agree that we have abundant means available to blow us all to smithereens, whatever the finesse and details of the negotiations. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) cited certain facts and figures in that regard.

I am not saying that we should not negotiate hard. Of course we should do so, and we should be realistic and practical. We are all aware of what the Soviet Union can and will get up to given half the chance. But surely, if the will is there, we can begin the process of agreement, bearing in mind that a balance more or less exists.

On the Soviet side, there is considerable scope for opportunity in these talks. We must take advantage of the present Soviet mood. There is a new Soviet leader and new men and policies emerging. In assessing the Russian stance, we are entitled to look at what Gorbachev stands for. As some hon. Members know, I have probably spent more time with Mr. Gorbachev than any other Government Member or Back-Bencher because I had the honour to be his official host as chairman of the British branch of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. I am therefore entitled to make judgments. That is the only reason for mentioning that fact. Whenever one is nice to a person, one risks the animosity or sarcasm of cold war cynics who say. "Temple-Morris has been wooed by Gorbachev." I think that one is entitled to give one's views without hearing such accusations.

Mr. Gorbachev is entitled to make peace offers without being accused of making propaganda, as the right hon. Member for Leeds, East pointed out. Mr. Gorbachev had a deep concern for the Soviet economy. He would admit that, under the present system, the Soviet economy is not working, but he desperately wants to improve it. The concentration on internal affairs by his Administration since he came to power is evidence of that. He cannot afford to do what he has to do if he has to play star wars as well.

I agree with what the Foreign Secretary said about the anti-satellite system and the only anti-ballistic system in the world which are deployed around Moscow. The Russians are doing much work on such programmes, but we must remember that one reason for the intensity of Soviet feeling about star wars is that the Russians cannot afford it, yet are afraid of losing it. Star wars involves technology and systems far in advance of anything deployed around Moscow.

However, the Russians will play star wars if they have to. They are a super-power. I believe that they know—perhaps subliminally—that they are No. 2, but they feel that they have to keep up. There is almost desperation in their hope that they will not have to do so. The domestic repercussions of keeping up with star wars could be dangerous. Against that haru political background, I believe that Mr. Gorbachev and his Administration are, to use the Prime Minister's phrase, sincere in their wish to do business. This is a good opportunity. If we lose it, things will never be quite the same again.

The main theme of the talks must be disarmament. The Western world and the Soviet bloc expect that. If we fail, the strains on the Western alliance will be considerable. There is NATO unity as the talks commence, but many will agree with me that, if the negotiations are not seen to succeed, the preservation of that unity will be difficult in the medium and longer term.

The President's speech to the United Nations was unhelpful in promoting the success of the talks. I do not minimise the importance of regional conflicts or the supreme importance of human rights in the Soviet Union. However, those important matters must be secondary in the negotiations. They could best be discussed after progress has been made on the main question, rather than cause resentment in the Soviet Union by being promoted over what the Russians and most sensible people see as the main theme of the talks. I also fail to understand how anyone can expect the Soviet Union to discuss Afghanistan at the request of the American President without also discussing, for example, the middle east.

My grave fear is that the hard liners in the United States Administration are winning. There is nothing wrong with star wars or anything else being used to secure the best bargain in arms limitation talks, but I suspect that not far below the surface, certainly among some hard liners in America, there is a feeling that the Soviet Union should be pressed to compete with star wars, because it would not be able to put its internal affairs in order and its economy would be hit so hard that it would eventually break. The

concept of pushing the Soviet Union into a corner, which I have heard expressed in a number of quarters, is more frightening than virtually any other.

I have been critical, and perhaps I may use that fact as credit for the sincerity of what I am about to say. I greatly welcome the achievements of the Foreign Secretary and the Foreign Office in making East-West relations a priority since the 1983 general election. I have no doubt that the various visits undertaken by my right hon. and learned Friend throughout the Eastern bloc, the Prime Minister's visit to Hungary and what has been said privately to the Americans, have had no small part to play in bringing the United States to the negotiating table. It is no secret that the Americans were not overwhelmingly eager to take their place at that table until relatively recently and particularly until the last presidential elections. Our role within the Western alliance is limited. The alliance is dominated by one partner. In anything that we say publicly or privately we have to take that into account. We depend upon the Americans for our western security and we are grateful to them. On the other hand, that is a slight handicap in discussing the detail of American policy and in having honest disagreements about the way it is going in relation to the middle east, central America or anywhere else. It is our duty on occasion to speak out.

Let us consider star wars and the consequences of its failure. My view is that star wars represents a dangerous escalation of the arms race. Star wars will not end the nuclear threat. It is naive to think that it will. It makes it more, not less, likely that someone will — frightful though it is—be tempted to have a go.

The Soviet Union will not keep out of the space race on the unlikely premise that a future United States president will be magnanimous enough to hand over the benefits of the enormous western effort to achieve the most sophisticated technology in the most difficult area of the universe.

The United States and the West must find a compromise. The consequences of failure are simple, serious and terrible. I do not overstate the position. The race for the military use of space will be on in a big way and in a fashion which none of us have the knowledge to contemplate. The cost will be enormous. The resulting deprivation for the people of the world will be equally enormous. Relations between East and West will be soured, not just for now, but for the foreseeable future.

An arms limitation agreement will become much more difficult because of those bad relations and because the Soviet Union will rely upon sheer numbers of missiles in case their eventual space system is inferior to that developed by the West.

Ironically, the more successful star wars is, the more money will have to be spent on conventional weapons. If the President's wishes come true, unfortunately conventional weapons will become that much more important.

Last but not least, star wars, far from offering a halcyon way to perpetual peace, makes nuclear and conventional war more, rather than less, likely.

12.17 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I shall begin my tour d'horizon at Lloyds avenue in the City and move quickly out to Nigeria, Zambia, Uganda, Pakistan and South Africa in relation to matters which are studiously avoided in the Queen's Speech.

Who can comprehend it? Johnson Matthey Bankers goes bust and a year later Mr. David Walker, an executive director of the Bank of England, describes the conduct of Mr. Rodney Galpin, an executive director of the Bank of England, as "daft and inexplicable." The Governor of the Bank of England is in a panic. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is perverting the course of justice. The Director of Public Prosecutions is in a muddle. The Export Credits Guarantee Department cannot explain how it was ripped off. The Foreign Secretary still has to deal with the Nigerian connection. The head of the fraud squad says to someone making a witness statement that if it is necessary he will arrest Margaret Thatcher herself. It is a bizarre story.

When Johnson Matthey went bust, about £120 million of its bad debts related to trade with Nigeria, and much of that was concerned with fraudulent transactions. Johnson Matthey was not the only one involved. There were others, such as BICC.

The ECGD was the victim of many frauds. Johnson Matthey provided pre-export finance for what has been described as "vanishing export contracts". That means that no goods were supplied, or that only a fraction of the goods that were supposed to be supplied were in fact provided. Often, Johnson Matthey Bankers got its money back, but it deliberately did not assign the export credits guarantees to itself. It left the benefit to go to the customers, so that they gained from the fraud.

In Nigeria there were also letters of credit frauds that involved ripping off the Nigerian Treasury. There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that Mr. Dikhu, who lived in Bayswater, was connected with those frauds. A group of Sindi families who were customers of Johnson Matthey Bankers were certainly connected with those frauds — Melani, Daswani, Bhotwani, Hemnani, Hadnani and Kishen cher Ani. It seems that a Mr. Golecha introduced those Sindi families to two directors of Johnson Matthey Bankers, Mr. Ian Fraser and Mr. Firth. It is also clear that a Mr. Macgregor and a Mr. Geoffrey Down, from the letters of credit department, knew what was going on at JMB.

The problems for JMB became serious when early in 1984 the coup took place in Nigeria. Then, the letters of credit were no longer honoured. When Mr. Fraser went to the customers and asked for his money back, they bluntly told him to "sod off", because he knew about the frauds that were taking place at the time. I believe that the Foreign Secretary has been having some difficulty in sorting out affairs with Nigeria in relation to the matter.

Let me be more specific. I refer to the Pahoomal brothers' fraud in relation to JMB. In November 1982, 29 forged Société Générale Surveillance certificates turned up at JMB. Detective chief inspector Cooling was investigating the matter. He thought there was a tip-off to one of the Pahoomal brothers. One of them disappeared to Singapore and one to Spain. I can now tell detective chief inspector Cooling what happened. Mr. Ian Fraser telephoned one of the Pahoomal brothers, and they disappeared. Mr. Fraser says that he solved that crime. He cannot remember whether he or the Société Générale Surveillance first informed the police but he does remember that during the following week he was on the telephone to the Pahoomal brothers. In June 1983 a report was submitted by the police to the Director of Public Prosecutions, and it is to the eternal shame of that director and the Attorney-General that they did not seek to take

[Mr. Brian Sedgemore]

extradition proceedings or seek to bring the Pahoomal brothers to justice. They have been forced to reopen the case since it was brought to light more recently. Most of the money from the Pahoomal brothers was eventually returned to JMB.

Hon. Members will realise that two desperately important consequences flow from knowledge of that fraud. Had the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Attorney-General been competent and done their duty, it is likely that there would never have been a JMB collapse because the perpetrators of the crime would have been brought to this country, there would have been a criminal trial and they would have been brought to justice. It is inconceivable that the directors of JMB could have carried on behaving as shamefully as they did.

The second consequence is that, when JMB went bust and was taken over by the Bank of England on 1 October 1984, the DPP and the Attorney-General knew there had been fraud. The directors of JMB and the Bank of England knew there had been fraud. Notwithstanding that, it was not until nine months later that the Governor of the Bank of England invited the fraud squad to investigate. That is such scandalous conduct that it warrants the resignation of the Governor of the Bank of England. One of the people heavily involved in the crime, the man who had built up the loan book, Mr. Ian Fraser, was running around the bank for months trying to plug the gaps of his own and other people's crimes. That lies at the door of the Governor of the Bank of England.

I refer to the case of Mr. Arjandash Hirinand Melwani. Late in 1983 he came into unauthorised possession of about $10 million of JMB's money. His intention was to do a quick deal and then return it to the bank. Unfortunately, Mr. Melwani was arrested in Nigeria. My Nigerian sources have confirmed his arrest. However, it was mark-up day. That means that the money had to go back immediately, and Mr. Ian Fraser was said to be on the verge of committing suicide. As Mr. Melwani was in prison and could not pay back the money, Mr. Fraser had desperately to invent a profit. I believe that that is one of the reasons why the book-keeping started to go wrong at JMB. From that moment it was impossible to keep the books straight. It is clear that all the Sindi families know that. So did Mahmoud Sipra, because he has talked about it to people who have talked to me about it. Anyone who knew that Mr. Ian Fraser had been involved in that case did not have to blackmail Mr. Fraser but just had to go along and say that they knew about the case, and they would get a loan from JMB.

I have been struck by the fact that Mr. Ian Fraser has said on television that he has committed no dishonesty, he is an honourable man, and the only reason why he will not tell the public about the matter is that he has sworn the bankers' oath. I do not know what Mr. Fraser's bankers' oath was like, but I determined to find out for myself whether he was an honest man.

I had someone go and put a proposal to him, and take the recording that I now have with me, on a tape that I bought in Tottenham Court road. It records what Mr. Ian Fraser is doing today. Of course, I have a transcript and the police have a copy of the recording. Mr. Fraser admits that he is regularly engaged in black market currency deals in Nigeria. Those deals are calculated, first, to give him an easy profit and, secondly, to undermine Nigeria's economy.

The proposal put in the tape is that there should be a black market deal when a Nigerian has 10 million naira and wants to get sterling in this country but cannot because of exchange controls. There is a British business man in this country who wants to invest in Nigeria, and who is prepared to pay two and a half times the official rate. Mr. Fraser says that the problem is that the situation in Nigeria is now so difficult that one cannot walk around Lagos with millions of naira stuffed in one's back pocket. One certainly cannot walk around with suitcases full of it. He reckons that one can get only just over half a million naira into one's back pocket, and the deal can be done not in one but in 10 days. That is the sort of activity that bankers in Britain are engaged in today.

Mr. Ian Fraser says that Mr. Rodney Galpin, a director of the Bank of England, told him, "You keep your head down for three years and you will be back in banking." Is that really what Rodney Galpin thinks on behalf of the Bank of England — "Keep your head down", and, presumably, "Keep your mouth shut and you will be back in banking"?

When Mr. Ian Fraser left JMB, he got a job with a firm called Deechan Finance in Regent street. The principal shareholder is a Mr. Daswani, who is a customer at JMB. On 23 October this year Mr. Sipra's accountant telephoned Mr. Fraser, and got Mr. Daswani. They were talking about bribery, banking and Mr. Fraser. Mr. Daswani said:

> "A couple of call girls at night clubs, a few Xmas presents, birthday presents—don't make bribery. Everyone in banking does it."

The fraud squad has discovered that Mr. Ian Fraser had a couple of mistresses who needed expensive entertainment. Mahmoud Sipra told us that Mr. Abdul Shamgi provided the flat for Mr. Fraser in Mayfair.

Who is Mr. Abdul Shamgi? First, to be strictly fair, we know that he is an acquaintance of the Prime Minister, he is a friend of the chairman of the Conservative party and he is an erstwhile friend of the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. He knew him when Abdul Shamgi was being investigated by the Anti-Slavery Society here a couple of years ago. He is held up by the Conservative party as the kind of immigrant who can come to Britain, make millions of pounds and show how the free enterprise system works. Some of his senior colleagues have come to see me in the House and told me that he used to say, "Margaret will make me a knight." Given his propensity and his ability to borrow, I should think that the chairman of the Conservative party will make him treasurer of the party.

I have here a schedule of Mr. Shamgi's borrowings at the time of the Price Waterhouse report. Mr. Abdul Shamgi owned Gomba Holdings. It owed Johnson Matthey Bankers £19 million. It owed the Punjab National Bank £4.25 million and it owed Credit Suisse £3 million. Mr. Abdul Shamgi was the principal in LLAC—the Wembley group. It owed Standard Chartered Bank £18.5 million. Mr. Abdul Shamgi was the principal in the Belgrave empire, which owed Barclays Bank £16.5 million.

It is not merely that Mr. Shamgi is a dishonest business man; he is also a crook. Mr. Shamgi bought the Gomba Stonefield empire in Cumnock in Scotland and he set up a shell of a factory producing heavy vehicles. He received

many grants from the Scottish Development Agency. Then, when he had got those grants, he moved the whole operation, lock stock and barrel, to Rochester. The Scottish Development Agency has issued a writ against him. That is why I am not going to talk about it any more.

I now turn to the Kampala city council, where the last of Mr. Shamgi's frauds was committed and completed only a few months ago.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I tell my hon. Friend that there is great ill feeling among many people in Scotland about what happened over there?

Mr. Sedgemore: I am sure that there is, and there will be even greater ill feeling when they know the full story.

Mr. Shamgi entered into a trading contract with Kampala city council. A bill was discounted by Johnson Matthey Bankers for about $3 million. The money has actually come through. It belongs to Johnson Matthey Bankers. The last $1 million came through only a few months ago.

When Mr. Abdul Shamgi's partner said, "This belongs to the bank," Mr. Shamgi said, "They will never see this money. They don't know I have got it." Mr Abdul Shamgi's partner has been to the fraud squad to make a statement. What I cannot understand is why this luminary in the Conservative firmament is not in a remand prison, awaiting committal for trial at the Central Criminal court for fraud. I have always understand that Victorian values were about respect, the family life and the fear of God. According to Mr. Abdul Shamgi, they are about bribery, corruption, fraud, and tarts for bankers.

What I cannot understand about the international swindle in which Johnson Matthey Bankers was engaged is why, after the Bank of England went in, it resolutely and determinedly sought to put international financial criminals back into business—the Immans, Mr. Shamgi and Mr. Sipra.

Mr. Sipra had about 18 companies in America. We have been talking to the New York lawyers of Dow Chemicals who did Mr. Sipra for fraud. They say that each of those companies, in the late 1970s, perpetrated one fraud and then took no further action. When Dow Chemicals decided that it would get him at all costs—and it took the company four years to do it — he immediately came to London in 1980, looking for a bank to give him money. There it was—Johnson Matthey.

The number of frauds that Mr. Sipra has committed is infinite. It is not that he does it occasionally. He does nothing else but commit fraud. In August I wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer about the Exinco fraud, in which Mr. Sipra got $3 million on a fraudulent bill of lading.

I have in my possession about 50 pages from Mr. Stephen Weeks relating to the wrecking of the film "Bengali Lancers" by Mr. Sipra. He states that Mr. Sipra tried to persuade him to file a fraudulent insurance claim for £1·25 million. I also have a set of documents relating to Peter Duffell, the writer who has been ripped off by Mr. Sipra. Mr. Sipra's painter turned up yesterday demanding £4,000, but Mr. Sipra has done a bunk and is now in Karachi. Even as I speak, a north American company is seeking to serve yet another writ on Mr. Sipra for another shipping fraud. That is the man who owed Johnson Matthey $70 million, yet it tried to restore his position as a trader. What kind of country do we live in where that sort of action is tolerated?

Mr. Sipra, who owes the Bank of England $70 million, took out a legal action in the Supreme Court of New York. I have his legal document—all 32 pages of it. Mr. Sipra thought up a paranoid conspiracy by Harry Oppenheimer, Chartered Consolidated, Johnson Matthey Bankers and the Bank of England to put him out of business. He is claiming $300 million damages from the Bank of England.

The Bank of England was desperate to stop the action because it reached an agreement with Mr. Sipra in June, "You stop your action in New York" — and I have documentary evidence of this—"and we will not take out a contempt action in the English High court and we will drop our Mareva action against you." The whole position is bizarre because the agreement was reached in June, yet the New York court action lapsed on 24 May —such is the brilliance of counsel and solicitors who advise the Bank of England.

There was another aspect to settling the deal. The Bank of England offered the equity of 1 Chester terrace to Mr. Sipra for £65,000, although there was between £100,000 and £300,000 equity in the property. The Bank of England denies that it had anything to do with the deal. However, Mr. Sipra regards it as a good faith action by the Bank of England. I do not know why he should expect good faith when it is he who owes the money. The Bank of England wanted Mr. Sipra to do a wider deal.

Mr. Sipra's solicitor says on a tape recording:

"Well I tell you that transaction was a good faith move . . . in consideration of Sipra's allowing the proceedings in New York to be discontinued. They have signed in good faith allowing him to have the house for £65,000. That is how it came up . . . There were two pages of that agreement, the June agreement. The main point was Sipra's stopping the action in New York and there was the financial terms of course, one of which was about the house. Now Mr. Sipra, but not by design, had allowed the proceedings to be discontinued. He then telephoned the bank in a panic and as a sign of good faith on their part, bearing in mind the other provisions of the agreement, they allowed the house to come out of the general pot."

The general pot belongs to the taxpayer, not the Bank of England. What is it doing giving that crook a gift out of money belonging to the general taxpayer?

Although the Bank of England admits that it entered into negotiations with Mr. Sipra to get him to validate a doubtful authority that it had to take money in March, it denies that there were any other negotiations with Mr. Sipra. However, on 28 September 1984 the Bank of England moved in and took $27·3 million from Mr. Sipra's companies and put the money into his loan account. The problem is that the bank claims it had oral authority resulting from a conversation between Mr. Sipra and Mr. Fraser, but Mr. Sipra did not have the full power of attorney to grant that authority. Ever since then the Bank of England has been trying to validate its doubtful authority. It tried it in March and was advised by its lawyers not to go ahead with the scheme. It denied that it tried it in July. I merely point out that there are some surrounding documents.

Secondly, Mr. Sipra's accountant, Mr. Ahmed Hussain, was with Mr. Sipra on 25 July. He saw a four-page letter which was concerned with the arrangement and a covering letter from Mr. David Curtis of Hambros bank, which asked, in effect, "Could you pre-date this letter to June or July 1984?" If that is true, the Bank of England has been conspiring to utter forged documents and to commit fraud against the other creditors.

The House should know that Mr. Sipra's solicitor, in a tape recording, has verified what the Bank of England

[Mr. Sedgemore]

denies had happened. The transcript of the recorded questions and answers with Mr. Sipra's solicitor, Michael Grant, reads:

"He can't seem to make up his mind when talking to me or others, whether or not the proposals for the deal with JMB came from JMB or from himself.

They came from the Bank.

I believe that they are behaving rather improperly.

Who, the bank?

Yes.

I think you are right.

Mr. Sipra told me there is a whole series of correspondence between him and the Bank going back and forth over this deal. As you understand it, is that basically true?"

The deal that is there referred to is Mr. Sipra saying to the bank, "I will sign your documents and give you your valid authority if you give me some cash and some ships and return my film studios to me at a cheap price. I want you to give me back cheaply my Tiger Horse film company." The solicitor says:

"Yes. There is a wealth of correspondence on it. There is a great deal of exchange correspondence on it.

Is your understanding of it that the Bank's position is sufficiently explicit in their letters to him?

There is one letter I can think of which is explicit.

So his position is therefore, protected to an extent that as long as he has that letter or they know he has that letter" — and this is the critical answer—

"There is one letter over four pages which came off of their solicitor's word processor, clearly marked as such which sets out a deal along the lines you have mentioned."

In other words, the solicitor is corroborating the accountant. I would not put Mr. Sipra in the witness box as the chief witness for the prosecution, but he has provided corroboration on a number of occasions in different ways. I am not quite sure how the Bank of England intends to get out of that.

Mr. David Curtis realised that I was on to him in September. He called a meeting at Hambros bank, which was attended by himself, Mr. Thomason, one other person from either JMB or the Bank of England, Mr. Sipra and Mr. Adrian Huggins, who was Mr. Sipra's solicitor. My information about the meeting comes from a secretary, Ann Duffy. Secretaries are very useful. She was present for only part of the meeting but she says that they were discussing how they could stop Mr. Sipra's accountant getting this information around. Mr. Adrian Huggins said that he did not want to play any part in that. That can be interpreted in many ways and I shall not attempt to interpret what was going on at the meeting. However, he was asked a question and asked also to nod if he agreed with the answer. He nodded. Ann Duffy was asked to type out the fact that he had answered the question and had nodded. The document was put into a filing cabinet and she was asked to destroy the copies.

What kind of——

Mr. Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I realise that you can have little control over the subjects that are raised in a debate of this nature, but it seems that we are having a full speech from the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) for the prosecution, as it were, which could continue for the next hour. At what time will the Front Bench replies commence? Is there any likelihood that anyone else will be able to contribute to the debate if the hon. Gentleman continues to address the House in such a way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Paul Dean): As the hon. Member for Dorset, West (Mr. Spicer) has said, the debate on the Address is a wide-ranging one. I remind the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) that there are many Members who wish to contribute to the debate.

Mr. Sedgemore: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I take the point. I believe that the entire country wants to know what happened in the JMB case, and I doubt very much whether I will get another opportunity to deal with it. I crave the indulgence of the House on this occasion. I shall try to come quickly to a close.

Mr. Sipra's solicitor talks about the meeting on 26 September. He says that Mr. Sipra said that there was some kind of authority but that he refused to sign anything and that the stories were getting around to other people, which is why some action was needed.

Mr. David Curtis says that no such document existed. The evidence to the contrary comes from an accountant, a solicitor, Mr. Sipra and some back-up documents. The only way we shall ever sort that matter out is by setting up an inquiry into the Johnson Matthey affair. Given the extraordinary circumstances which I have been repeating in relation to other aspects of the Johnson Matthey affair, I should have thought that the case for an inquiry was now irresistible and overwhelming other than to a Government who are desperate to secure a cover up.

I shall refer briefly to Mr. Michael Hepker because I have mentioned him previously in the House. He has accused me of completely misleading the House. He borrowed money through Ravensbury Investments to develop a Tesco site in south Wales. That turned out to be fraud. The Johnson Matthey revenge story equally turned out to be a fraud. Two Welshmen, a Mr. Roy Page from the Welsh Development Agency and a Mr. David Liddiatt, put up some money to develop a Sainsbury's site near Swansea. When they went to the south of France to collect their share of the money from Mr. Hepker, who was putting all this money through a tax avoidance scheme, they were told that the big boys in the Isle of Man would not like it. They did not like what was done in relation to the Tesco deal. They held the two Welshmen responsible. I have seen the files and I do not know how they can be responsible.

The Swansea city council paid out £675,000. Of that, £25,000 went to a firm of solicitors and £600,000 went —I have the telegraphic transfer—into Mr. Hepker's Swiss bank account at the Banque Populaire Suisse in Geneva, which is held in the name of the Anglo European Development Corporation. I have checked other transactions through that bank account and discovered that it is Mr. Hepker's bank account. If anyone wants to obtain the number, it is 10.946772/0. The Inland Revenue has now issued a claim for £300,000 corporation tax which has not been paid. No action has been taken against Mr. Hepker, although I told the fraud squad about the case some time ago.

When I last mentioned the matter in the House I referred to the supasave-money save David Lee liquidation. There, the liquidator, acting on behalf of Imperial Tobacco which has lost £500,000, has carried out a £200,000 investigation into a "money-go-round" fraud by Mr. Michael Hepker. The liquidator submitted the papers to the Director of Public Prosecutions. The solicitor

for the DPP has said that there is a prima facie case of fraud, but there has been no charge because the DPP said that he would rather the Inland Revenue dealt with the matter. It is fair to say that £1·5 million is owed to the Revenue. The Revenue has not dealt with it. I do not understand. There is one case after another where there appears to be paralysis on the part of the DPP and the Inland Revenue. What on earth is going on with our society? If I go to the east end of London and pinch 80p out of a till, three car loads of policemen come down. Steal 280 million pence, as Mr. Hepker has done, and he sits up in Leeds running a public company.

Mr. David Walker says that the kinds of thing that I have been saying are damnable. I believe that it is damnable that the Governor of the Bank of England, Mr. David Walker, Mr. Rodney Galpin, Mr. Patrick Smith, Mr. Patrick Brennan, Mr. Martin Harper, Mr. George Copus, Mr. David Curtis, and Mr. Thomason should be treating with international financial criminals in the way that they have. The sooner we clear up this kind of cesspit, which is not helping the Bank of England, the City of London, the English legal system or the parliamentary system, the better. I shall gladly give evidence to that inquiry.

12.50 pm

Mr. Dennis Walters (Westbury): The House will be relieved to know that I have not been carrying out any criminal investigations. Therefore, I shall not follow up what was said by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) but will revert to the main theme of the debate—foreign affairs.

Before turning to the middle east, I wish to associate myself with the remarks of some of my hon. Friends about the quiet skill of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. I also very much agree with the remarks of the right hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice), who said that aid is a moral imperative.

Seldom has the outlook for a peaceful settlement in the middle east been so bleak. The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) said that if there were a resolution of the Arab-Israeli problem it would not remove many of the other disputes in the area. That may well be true. However, resolving the conflict would go a long way towards removing the main threat to peace. Therefore, we should give priority to bringing this about.

Recent events are partly to blame for the lack of progress. However, it is lamentable that so little has been achieved in the year since President Reagan's re-election. The fault lies primarily in Washington. After his landslide victory, President Reagan was in a strong position to act swiftly and decisively. There was a Reagan initiative on the table. Although it was shelved because of opposition in the area, it could have been revived without much difficulty to form the basis of a new, major United States-led peace offensive. Admittedly, for it to have a reasonable chance of success it should have envisaged an international forum and recognised the need for participation by the Soviet Union which—in my view mistakenly—the American Administration have been over-anxious to avoid. Instead, even before the recent disasters, not much progress had been made.

After a great deal of delay Mr. Richard Murphy, and then Mr. Shulz went round the area on exploratory visits which led nowhere. The American response to the brave and imaginative initiative launched by King Hussein after his significant agreement with Mr. Arafat was surprisingly negative and frosty. When Mr. Murphy made a subsequent visit to the middle east he dashed any hopes that had been raised that he would meet a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation by imposing conditions that were so demanding that King Hussein could not possibly fulfil them. The United States Administration was in fact upholding the Kissinger doctrine in a different way by allowing Israel to dictate the terms for negotiation with Palestinian representatives. No Palestinian leader, however conciliatory, could accept them and retain his credibility.

More recently, there followed a series of calamities. Several incidents and killings confirm that, among the splinter groups of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, there are men of violence who, although repudiated by the leadership, are willing to defy both their leaders and international law. The Israeli raid on Tunis, in so-called response to one such act, was an unacceptable form of national terrorism. Although not so costly in human suffering as the unprovoked invasion of Lebanon when nearly 20,000 lives were lost, the Tunis attack was a gross infringement of the sovereignty of a moderate and friendly state. Incidentally, more than 100 people were killed, the majority of whom were Tunisian civilians. President Reagan's defence of that aggression was indefensible and the British Government rightly joined every other member of the Security Council in condemning it.

The hijacking of the Achille Lauro was a botched-up act of violence which included the senseless and cruel killing of an elderly American citizen. Although the PLO leadership had condemned the outrage and agreed with President Mubarak to bring those responsible to trial, President Reagan decided to pre-empt any such trial by instructing the American air force to intercept the Egyptian transport plane carrying the gunmen and force it to land in Sicily. At that point, American soldiers clashed with Italian police on Italian soil about who should arrest the passengers. Understandably, Mr. Craxi was outraged and shocked by such behaviour.

Mr. Mikardo: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Walters: The hon. Gentleman made a long speech in the debate. I shall not give way, because I know that several other hon. Members wish to speak.

The effect of that episode was to weaken President Mubarak and King Hussein—the two principal moderate leaders in the Arab world—and to bring down the Italian Government, which has now fortunately been reconstituted under the same leadership. It is certainly time that sensible, cool diplomacy and statesmanship replaced the feverish, high-handed and counter-productive activity that too often emanates from Washington.

The collapse of the visit by the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to London was a sad ending to the courageous decision taken by the British Prime Minister and the Government to arrange a meeting with my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. Had the meeting taken place, it would not have been a decisive event towards peacemaking, but it was an imaginative step in the right direction. The responsibility for the failure must lie in the confusion prevailing in the Palestinian camp and was a foolish error of judgment.

However, the root causes of the problem have not changed. Israel has occupied all of Palestine since 1967. In defiance of United Nations resolutions and international

[Mr. Walters]

law, it has not only held on to the territories then acquired, but has colonised them with illegal settlements and oppressed the population. That remains the main cause for the continuing instability and tension in the area. Peace in the middle east is in everyone's interests, except that of the extremists, but there can be no lasting peace settlement unless Palestinian rights are recognised and some justice is accorded them.

The best way to make progress is for direct negotiations to take place among the parties involved, but in the forum of an international conference. That is what King Hussein was trying to achieve. Obviously, it was essential for the Palestinians to participate if the talks were to be relevant. The Venice declaration recognised that the PLO should be associated with any negotiations, and the agreement between King Hussein and Mr. Arafat had made that easier.

Although the British Government made a wise attempt to assist and the European Community's response was positive, the United States Administration continued relentlessly to snub King Hussein, with the profoundly regrettable result that his initiative had been effectively killed.

Where do we go from here? Mr. Peres has made an important speech expressing his desire to make progress towards peace. Mr. Peres is not Mr. Begin or Mr. Shamir, and his words should command attention. The question to be probed is whether the difference between him and the Likud leadership is a matter of substance or of style. But it certainly should be probed in order to discover whether he would be willing to discuss the future of the occupied territories with those who are genuine and recognisable representatives of the Palestinian people, and to make realistic territorial concessions in exchange for peace.

At the same time, the PLO executive should seize the opportunity provided by the present stalemate to broaden its base. A Palestinian Government in exile should be formed either in Cairo or in Tunis—preferably in Cairo — to include a number of distinguished Palestinians, whether already associated with the PLO leadership or not, who command widespread respect and international influence. Such a development would greatly strengthen the Palestinian negotiating credibility.

Finally, it should be recognised yet again that the only power which can impose a middle east settlement remains the United States. The tragedy is that Washington has for too long allowed its policy making to be wholly subordinated to the apparent interests of Israel, instead of giving precedence to its own interests, those of its European allies and its Arab moderate friends, and indeed even to the true long-term interests of Israel itself. In those circumstances, it has been easy for the Israelis to prevent the peace-making process of negotiation from going ahead.

We should all remember that world peace could be at issue in the middle east, and that the time is long overdue when the United States should cease to be one of the players on the Israeli side and return to the umpire's box. If that happened, the position in the area could be rapidly and drastically changed. It is a great challenge to British and European statesmanship to bring that about.

1.2 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): My speech, in common with the remarkable parliamentary tour de force of my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), is concerned with truth to Parliament, behaviour in high places and what is happening to our society. Both speeches require deep considered answers.

As one who is not a member of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, I should like to pay tribute to the hard work done in that Committee by parliamentary colleagues of all parties. Too often their work goes unsung, and it is work done on behalf of the House of Commons.

I echo the request made during business question yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition for an early debate on the report of the circumstances surrounding the sinking of the Belgrano. My hon. Friends the Members for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo), for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) and for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh), by their application and sheer hard work, have produced a minority report that deserves an answer.

In particular, the Prime Minister owes the House an explanation of why the first draft of Sir John Nott's speech on 4 May 1982 was withheld from the Select Committee's inquiry. As Mr. Speaker knows, I thought that the proper way to proceed was to place that internal paper of Government almost as soon as it came into my hands into the hands of Mr. Speaker. I did that on Monday 21 October, in Mr. Speaker's capacity as guardian of the House of Commons' right not to be deceived. I have not the slightest uncertainty that this is a genuine document. Equally, the Clerk to the Select Committee gives me a categorical assurance that no such draft came before his Committee or was seen by him. I am informed that it was not in the so-called "crown jewels".

I should like to read a short extract from that document:

"On 2 May, at 8 pm London time, one of our submarines attacked the Argentine cruiser, Belgrano, which was escorted by two destroyers. This surface attack group was close to the total exclusion zone and closing upon elements of the Task Force. The cruiser itself had substantial fire power provided by six and five inch guns and Seacat anti-aircraft missiles. Together with its escort ships, the threat to the Task Force was such that the Task Force Commander could ignore it only at his peril. It would not have been possible to continue to enforce the total exclusion zone if the Belgrano group had been allowed to continue unmolested. The House will note that the attack involved the cruiser only. The escorts were not attacked and we believe subsequently went to the assistance of the damaged cruiser. Two torpedoes hit the Belgrano and Argentine reports now indicate that she has sunk."

That should be compared with what was actually said to the House on 4 May 1982. To cut my speech short, I refer the House to *Hansard* for 4 May 1982 at column 30 and draw attention to the word "detected".

During business questions yesterday I asked the Leader of the House to put a copy of John Nott's first draft into the Library, as it would be helpful to hon. Members. He replied:

"I shall look into that matter." — [*Official Report*, 7 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 114.]

There is a reason why hon. Members should be able to see the first draft of John Nott's speech. His amendments are there, but the amendments of the first draft are to do with parliamentary protocol and not with substance. The crucial substantial change in the statement must have been required by someone else. At the stage of the first draft, it did not occur, apparently, to John Nott to alter "attack"

to "detect". It appears that the change from incomplete truth to downright deception was made on the orders of someone else, and that someone else can only have been the Prime Minister.

I refer the House to appendix 14 of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee report — the letter written by the Select Committee to John Nott, to which he replied:

"Thank you for your letter of 1 April. Some three years have passed since the event in question, and I do not recall why I should have used the word "detected". I am sorry that I cannot be more helpful."

Some forgettery! The document is a draft statement for Nott to make on 4 May. It states that the Belgrano was attacked at 8 pm on 2 May. Nott's actual statement was that the Belgrano was detected at 8 pm on 2 May. The change cannot have been accidental. It must have been deliberate. That brings me back to what I have always thought was the key point—the fact that the cover up started, not subsequent to Nott, but with his initial statement.

I believe that the Prime Minister and John Nott knew that the Belgrano was sailing away from the exclusion zone, but that they wanted to sink her and, as we had not declared war formally and were acting in self-defence under article 51, they had to make it appear that the Belgrano was an immediate threat. The word "attack" was accurate, but it might provoke questioning. The word "detect" and the untrue statement about the Belgrano closing in on the task force would allay any fears among our allies, who were being told that we were not the aggressors.

In this connection I stress the significance, which is reinforced by the leaked Nott first draft, of the Prime Minister's admission in her letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 19 September 1984. Paragraph 11 of the annex to that letter appears in *Hansard* for 29 October 1984 and says:

"Conqueror's report on the Belgrano's position was received by Northwood at 3.40 pm and made known to senior naval officers there and at the Ministry of Defence later that afternoon . . . But she could have altered course again and closed on elements of the Task Force, acting in concert with the carrier to the north. In the light of the continued threat posed by the Argentine naval forces against the Task Force, the precise position and course of the Belgrano at that time was irrelevent. For this reason, the report was not made known to Ministers at the time."—[*Official Report*, 29 October 1982; Vol. 65, c. 790.].

The Prime Minister said that at 3.40 pm on 2 May Northwood was told of the Belgrano's course—that it had been and was sailing away from the exclusion zone. She said that later that afternoon the Ministry of Defence was told, but Nott, not once, but three times, and not just on 4 May, but on 13 May, said that Conqueror was "closing" on the task force. If his officials did not know the true course of the Belgrano, it is conceivable that the Government line about confusion and the "fog of war", to use Noel Annan's phrase, might be credible.

But they did know. So either the officials misled Nott, or he misled the House of Commons. It was not the officials who misled Ministers. It was Ministers who misled the House of Commons.

The words are specific. I believe that the change from "attack" to "detect", and the words "closing in on" are all part of the same pattern with the same purpose—to suggest that we faced an immediate and unavoidable engagement with the Belgrano and were acting in self-defence in sinking her.

Why did Nott allow the Civil Service draft to be changed to "detect", which he and the Prime Minister knew to be untrue? Why did they go to the trouble of altering texts and thereby presenting a deliberate, known and central untruth to the Commons? What did the Prime Minister, Nott and the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) know that the Civil Service in the Ministry of Defence did not know? The Prime Minister knew about the Peruvian peace proposals, as did people at Bush house that Sunday morning, from Foreign Office telegrams. Why was the draft of Nott's statement deliberately altered—certainly with the Prime Minister's agreement, or, as I am told, on her initiative at her instigation—two days after she, Nott and the right hon. Member for Hertsmere were told the truth?

In the past, excuses have been made for Nott—that in the "fog of war" he made a genuine mistake on 4 May 1982. Now, from the leaked first draft of the speech in the possession of Mr. Speaker, we know that Nott's crucial "mistake" in giving the Commons and the country the idea that the 44-year-old Belgrano was an immediate threat to the task force was a deliberate deception by the Prime Minister and Sir John Nott. The purpose of the deception was to enable the Prime Minister, having attacked the Belgrano, to scupper peace proposals that would have deprived her of military victory—the central purpose of the Falklands war needed to ensure the Prime Minister's domestic popularity.

Of course, the Prime Minister went to enormous lengths to try to ensure that the draft statement was withheld from the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs during its investigation into the events surrounding the sinking of the Belgrano. I repeat that the Clerk of the Select Committee — my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar knows that the Committee has an able Clerk, with a retentive memory — assures me that neither he nor Members of Parliament saw any such statement. It was not even in the "crown jewels".

Had it not been for the fortuitous events surrounding the troubles of the right hon. Member for Hertsmere — I have given him notice that I would refer to him—the Prime Minister might have got away with this document never seeing the light of day. The Director of Public Prosecutions has publicly announced that he is considering whether the right hon. Member for Hertsmere improperly communicated a document to an unauthorised person. I believe that the Director of Public Prosecutions would be failing in his duty if he did not ask Mr. Speaker for a copy of the draft speech that resides with him. I understand that Mr. Speaker has to seek the permission of the House to give documents in his possession to the DPP.

Though I make it clear that Miss Sara Keays did not herself give the document to me, I believe that the copy that I have given to Mr. Speaker originated in the papers of the right hon. Member for Hertsmere. Furthermore, the Director of Public Prosecutions should consider the public statement by Sara Keays in *The Mirror* on Saturday 12 October this year. It is available to hon. Members in full and, to save time, I shall read only part of it:

"The detective-sergeant in charge of the on-the-spot investigation amazed me by saying—no doubt to reassure me —that 10 Downing Street had been informed and had ordered a news blackout.

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

The matter, he added, had been referred to the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.

When I asked the reason for the news blackout, he said that there was a suggestion that it was a security matter."

I am not concerned with the motives or morality of Miss Sara Keays. Bluntly, I am not interested in bed, but I am interested in burglary.

How come Downing street was informed immediately about what is purported to be an ordinary burglary in Battersea? I suggest to the DPP that this bizarre burglary was an attempt to snatch back some of the papers of the right hon. Member for Hertsmere which incriminated the Prime Minister for her behaviour over the Falklands. I would not be surprised if the Keays burglary was carried out by the same thugs who were surprised by Hilda Murrell, the 78-year-old Shrewsbury rose grower, who was the subject of a brutal and callous murder. If that idea is thought fanciful, why should the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis be informed of what was happening about an ordinary burglary in south London? For heaven's sake, what was so special about the house of Elisabeth Keays?

I have been an hon. Member for nearly a quarter of a century. It would not have occurred to me to speak in these terms about the Governments of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), Sir Alec Douglas-Home or Harold Macmillan, my first Prime Minister. But we are faced with a cold, calculated, cynical and sustained deception, by the occupant of 10 Downing street, of the House of Commons and one of its senior Select Committees. If we simply shrug our shoulders and say that it happened three long years ago, by our inaction we injure democracy itself. Ministers, however exalted, should not be allowed to get away with deception and I join my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch in asking plaintively, "What is happening to Britain?"

1.18 pm

Mr. Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): We have had a most unusual debate. Had I not been present today, I would have been at the Duke of York's headquarters for a meeting of the council of the Parachute Regiment.

I am happy to say that if the men of 2 and 3 Para had been sitting in the Public Gallery to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), they would have been surprised and bewildered to hear that, three years after the event, the Belgrano still figures so large in the views of some hon. Members. *[Interruption.]* I am not prepared to accept interventions on that point. I would far rather listen to the men of my regiment than those we have heard in the House over the past three years.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary was right to concentrate on the events that will take place in Geneva. They will affect not only the United States and the USSR, but the whole world. It is vital that we should give our full support to the President of the United States in his negotiations there.

Important though Geneva is, we should never forget that tension, confrontation and ultimately conflict are far more likely to be triggered by events in the middle east than anywhere else. Indeed, the Foreign Secretary said that there was a depressing cycle of violence. That violence is not confined to Israel and its neighbouring states. It spills over, as we have seen in the last few weeks, and could result in an international incident that could cause another war.

The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) painted a broad canvas. I agree with much of what he said. If we had more time I would address more than a few words to the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), whom I last met in a market place in Brecon. However, I should like to question him in detail about the apparent change in attitude in his party, the members of which only a year ago were talking strongly about the removal of cruise missiles from the United Kingdom but who have now changed course and are lumping SS20s and cruise together. That is a welcome step forward. Can we hope that the Liberal party conference next year will confirm that view now that the Left wing of the party has become leaderless in that respect?

The breakthrough achieved by the Camp David accord between Israel and Egypt is the last positive step towards a wider settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but even that accord is in danger of breaking down. Israeli and Egyptian ambassadors have been withdrawn and the situation is not good. Unless that accord is reactivated with the support of the populations of both countries, I am sad to say that we shall face further trouble.

Rough waters in that area have not deterred King Hussein from launching his initiative aimed at achieving further settlement between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian people. The world should applaud his brave attempts which have continued since early this year when he signed an agreement with Yasser Arafat.

Most politicians and statesmen play with their careers, but people such as King Hussein and President Mubarak not only play with their careers, their thrones or presidencies, but put their lives on the line as well. We should applaud them.

King Hussein's aims have the full support of President Mubarak and are aimed at achieving agreement for a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation with adequate safeguards for the Israelis in terms of the demilitarisation of the West bank.

Such an agreement can never be reached without the full support of the Palestinian people. From my personal contacts with them I know that, although they might have changed their attitude somewhat over the years, in essence they still support the PLO and Yasser Arafat. Whether we believe that to be right or wrong, that is the position.

However, most Palestinians agree that past PLO policies which have centred on violence and terrorism have led only to more misery and oppression for them. That note of realism is getting through to all the Palestinian people. Certainly, in my recent discussions in Jerusalem with 40 or 50 leaders from the West bank and Jerusalem it was clear that they believe that Yasser Arafat should renounce force and be prepared to accept resolution 242, thus paving the way for peace negotiations through an acceptance of the existence of the state of Israel.

Hon. Members have mentioned the recent outbreaks of violence and terrorism in the middle east, which dealt a savage blow to the Hussein initiative and sadly led to the failure of the London talks with the King and PLO representatives.

No one should be in any doubt that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary were right to make an attempt to break the log jam. That the attempt did not succeed should not be seen as the end of the road.

It was only last week that the chairman of the International Democrat Union, Dr. Alois Mack of Austria, wrote to the Prime Minister in the following terms:

"In spite of recent events and setbacks to the peace process in the Middle East, the IDU remains convinced and the initiative of the King of Jordan and the President of Egypt should not be allowed to stall. We fully support your efforts to open this dialogue further, and we entirely recognise that the fact that they did not take place was entirely due to the failure of the two PLO representatives to give appropriate undertakings in respect of the renunciation of force and the acceptance of relevant UN resolution.

Our Washington communiqué made reference to the window of opportunity for peace. That window still exists, but it is narrowing. As IDU chairman, I would like to express my full support for both your past, and I hope future, attempts to provide assistance to all others who are working so courageously towards a final peaceful settlement."

Those are the views not only of the Conservative party, which sits in that organisation, but of many other centre and centre right parties throughout the world. There is a "window of opportunity", but that window will not exist for much longer. By the end of 1986 it may be too late. That window may have slammed shut because in July 1986 the Government of Israel will change and Mr. Shamir will become the Prime Minister. Anyone who has met both the present Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Peres, and Mr. Shamir must realise that at that point the chance of real negotiations between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians will become very slim indeed. The attitude of Mr. Peres and all that he and his party stand for in the middle east is directed towards a peaceful negotiation and co-existence with the people of Palestine.

Sadly, in my experience of talking to Mr. Shamir, he believes in a "Greater Israel", annexation and an increase of the Israeli population on the West bank. At that stage moderate opinion in the Arab world would recoil from any further negotiations, and who could blame the King Husseins and the Mubaraks of this world if they said, "We have put our heads above the parapet once too often and we are not going to do it again"? That is the view of other moderate leaders in the Arab world. They would say that they will never again take that chance, and a major opportunity will be lost. It is certain that escalating violence will follow close behind.

What of the future then? On the West bank and in Gaza, some 1·5 million Palestinians would continue to exist as second-class citizens alongside just over 3 million Israelis in Israel proper. In 20 years, those two populations may come into balance. What would happen in that Greater Israel? Would Palestinians be given full citizenship rights or would they be second-class citizens, initiating a form of apartheid which no one in this country or the House could recognise? That is the danger, and that is why it is right that the United Kingdom and Europe should use every effort to keep momentum going for negotiations, to support King Hussein and to draw in the reasonable Palestinian opinion which wishes to turn its back on violence but will return to it without any doubt unless there is genuine progress in the next year.

1.29 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I resent the way in which the hon. Member for Dorset, West (Mr. Spicer) was gratuitously offensive to my hon. Friends the Members for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), because the matters that they raised and the issues that they discussed are very important. The principle of the right of the public to know what Ministers and the Government are up to is extremely important. If those matters cannot be exposed here, where can they be exposed? My hon. Friends were right to raise them.

I shall confine my remarks to Latin America, which managed to get a line in the Queen's Speech when the Government claimed to support the Contadora process, and the implications of the debt crisis for the people of Latin America. While British interests there are normally assumed to be relatively modest, the Government's policy towards the Falkland Islands has changed their attitude towards the whole continent and led us into making a secret military treaty with the dictatorship in Chile.

In yesterday's issue of *The Guardian* there was a brief report—all too often such reports are brief—from Chile, which said:

"Six shot in Chile protests . . . six demonstrators had been wounded by gunshots and more than 250 arrested . . . Police used teargas, water cannon and riot-control pellets against protesters on university campuses, and in working-class areas and city centres throughout the country. As night fell at the end of the first day, troops patrolled Santiago in greater force, and helicopters beamed powerful searchlights at militant neighbourhoods."

Why do the British Government feel virtually paralysed and unable to do anything constructive about the dreadful violations of human rights in Chile? They continually turn a blind eye on the fate of so many people in prison in Chile. The reasons can be found in an excellent article by Duncan Campbell in the *New Statesman* of 25 January, in which he catalogues the way in which British policy towards Chile has been dictated entirely by considerations of the Government's approach towards the Falklands. He writes that a series of understandings were reached in 1982 between the British and Chilean Governments in which Britain gained:

"—Use of Punta Arenas, an air base in southern Chile, for RAF spy planes, disguised in Chilean markings.

—Use of Punta Arenas other areas to infiltrate SAS special forces into Argentina for espionage and to destroy Argentine aircraft on the ground;

—A complete exchange of intelligence, including monitoring and codebreaking of Argentina signals carried out by Chilean Naval intelligence staff.

The Chilean Government gained:

—RAF Canberra aircraft used in the secret operation . . .

—A squadron of RAF Hawker Hunter aircraft, most of which was delivered to Chile after the war started."

Most important was

"Britain's support in undermining United Nations investigations into Chilean human rights abuses, by opposing the reappointment of the UN's special investigators."

Many other things can be said about the Government's relationship with the Chilean dictatorship.

Of all the most murderous dictatorships in Latin America and other parts of the world, the Government of General Pinochet must take the prize for the number of people who have disappeared, the number of beatings and murders in the prisons and the poverty that has been imposed on the people. General Pinochet achieved power in 1973 by using British-built planes to bomb the Moneda palace, murder Salvador Allende, the President, and impose a dictatorship. The Government are happy to recognise and do business with it, and apparently they are happy to provide arms for it. Those arms are being used to murder Chilean people. It is a spin-off of the Falklands war and the Government's approach to it that they are

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

prepared to provide those arms and that support for the Chilean junta. The Government stand condemned and in disgrace as a result.

On Monday next week the Luxembourg summit will take place. It is interesting that the Government announced this week in the Queen's Speech that they support the Contadora initiative to bring peace to central America, yet apparently the Foreign Secretary cannot attend the Luxembourg summit, which is an important part of the Contadora process. Despite the Government's protestations that they support that process, their record since 1979 has not been one of respecting the democracy of the people of Nicaragua. It has been the opposite—slavish support for United States policy in that region. We well know what that policy is. In effect, it has been to encircle, attack, economically undermine and militarily attempt to destroy the Government of Nicaragua. That Government took power in 1979 after the removal of the dictatorship. It faced election and was elected by a much larger vote than the present British Government achieved, and a far larger vote and participation than the President of the United States achieved when he was elected.

The cost of the war being fought against the people of Nicaragua by the United States through surrogate forces is appalling. In July 1985, President Ortega announced that material damage resulting from the Contra war amounted to $1·3 billion. In 1981, the Nicaraguan defence budget was only 7 per cent. of total Government spending. To enable the people to defend themselves, that defence spending has now gone up to 40 per cent.

As a result of the war, 170,000 people have been displaced. Production has been lost. Twenty-five million dollars has been lost on the coffee harvest as a result of Contra activity. There is also the human cost. Twelve thousand people have been killed or wounded by the Contra. That is in a very small country. Many others have been kidnapped, taken away, and may well be missing for ever more. Their fate is totally unknown. What should and could the British Government be doing about that?

It is obvious that every time the Contadora nations in central America have attempted to come to a peaceful arrangement or to form some kind of treaty on the matter, the United States Government have changed their stance and blocked that attempt. *The Washington Post* of 6 November last year quoted a leaked United States Government statement which said:

"We have effectively blocked Contadora Group efforts to impose a second draft of revised Contadora Act. Following intensive U.S. consultations with El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica, the Central Americans submitted a counterdraft to the Contadora states on October 20 . . . that shifts concern in Contadora to a document broadly consistent with U.S. interests."

I submit that United States interests in central America depend entirely on removing the Government of Nicaragua, not because it is a military threat to the United States or anything else like that but because of the independence of the people of Nicaragua and their determination to overcome their own poverty, their own debt and their own underdevelopment. They are an inspiration to many other people throughout the continent. That is why the United States Government oppose them, and that is why the British Government support United States policy in the region.

The Federation of Conservative Students wing of the Government party is openly supporting the Contra, and sent one of its representatives there, where he went on patrol with the Contra forces which were attempting to destroy the Government. If our Government approve of that form of terrorism, they should say so or denounce the Federation of Conservative Students for what it is doing in Nicaragua.

The CIA's "freedom fighters' manual", as it is called, has recently been published in the United States, after it had been leaked. It headlines what the free Nicaraguan can do in order to down the Marxist tyranny. Some of it is laughable. It calls on people to come in late to work, to leave lights on and to waste water as much as possible. It calls on them to destroy crops on the state-owned farms and to destroy the communications network. In short, it calls for the long-term and permanent destabilisation of that country, in the same way that the CIA destabilised other countries in Latin America, particularly Chile, before the coup in 1973.

We require from the Government a clear statement that they seriously support the Contadora process, and that in supporting it they oppose the American military presence in central America and oppose American military aid being used as a destabilising force.

It would be appropriate if we could have a clear undertaking from the Government about their attitude towards loans to Nicaragua that are put through the Inter-American Development Bank and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. It appears that the Government strategy is based not on the creditworthiness of either Nicaragua or El Salvador but solely on American interests in the region. In effect, they are instructing British representatives to support all loans to El Salvador, come what may, and to oppose all loans to Nicaragua, come what may. It is a further example of the way that the Government put political considerations of their own rather curious, paranoid view of the world above the needs of the poorest people of some of the poorest regions in the world.

On the same theme, I hope that the Government are prepared to tell us what proposals they will put to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the problems of missing people in central America, of refugees being forcibly moved from border regions to other parts and on the safety of those people. It is a matter of great concern that Britain, as one of the European countries supposedly supporting the Contadora process, appears to be at variance with every other European Government in their policy towards central America.

I want to discuss the international debt crisis and its effect on Latin America—which is the largest debtor region in the world —and also the concept of that debt. It might not please Conservative Members, but there is a growing unanimity throughout Latin America to adopt a different strategy to deal with the international debt crisis because of the way in which commodity prices have continually fallen for producer countries while interest charges have continually risen. That has resulted in the debt burden becoming larger and larger. The different strategy could either be that followed by the Government of Peru, which would limit debt repayments to no more than 10 per cent. of export earnings, or a complete moratorium on debt repayments.

Representatives of most Latin American countries attended a recent conference in Cuba. I shall quote from

the federal deputy and vice president of the Foreign Relations Commission of the Chamber of Deputies of Brazil, João Herãn Netto, who said:

"Within the plurality of forces present, the Brazilian delegation confirmed that there was a broad consensus on the following points: The Brazilian foreign debt was contracted behind the backs of our people and its total is now, insofar as interest alone is concerned, an unbearable burden due to the immense social cost which threatens even the return to democracy in the country. It is, therefore, a political problem which cannot be reduced to economic dimensions.

The IMF conditions imposed on debtor countries are unacceptable because they burden those countries with the whole weight of the international crisis, determining a breakdown in the structures of those economies which are forced to pay exorbitant interest rates. We were transformed into exporters of capital, and we have already paid much more than was loaned to us."

That is a common and popular view within Latin America. The total debt is $360 billion and many banks have stopped lending to the region. Each year $25 billion more is leaving Latin America than is entering. The poor of the Latin American countries are propping up western banks, rather than the popular view that it is the other way round. It is time that the debt crisis was looked at from that point of view.

I want to quote Michael Manley, a former Prime Minister of Jamaica, who this month wrote an article in *South* magazine. He said:

"The developed countries find it easier politically to sidestep the issue, because they don't want to face their own electorates with a plan that would involve some degree of contribution from everybody. The Third World has long grown used to pulling in its belt, cutting back on its social services, enduring falls in already abysmally low standards of living. We, therefore, are already making the contribution of our sacrifice to the solution of the problem."

The United Nations recently published its 1985 world economic survey, which quotes in detail the fall in world trade, and, more significantly, the increasing burden of debt repayment on very poor countries and the reduction in real prices for basic commodity products from Third world countries. Those are the issues that must be faced. If they are not, the poverty of the Third world will become greater and greater, the international banking system will be under greater and greater strain and probably collapse, and the poor of Europe and of Latin America will suffer as a result of that crisis.

I hope that these issues will be faced by the Government and that they will come clean on their policies towards the international debt crisis and Latin America.

1.45 pm

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): In the few minutes that remain available to Back Benchers in today's debate, I shall not take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). I hope that he will not mind if I do not pursue his remarks about South America. Instead, I shall address myself to the middle east crisis, especially after visiting both Jordan and Israel recently.

First, I express my full support for every word that was said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice). I concur entirely with his argument that it is a moral imperative that the Government increase their aid budget. Like my right hon. Friend, I hope that the latest rumours that we read in the press about the size of the aid budget for next year will prove to be true when they are published next week.

When I returned from Israel and Jordan, I appreciated that Britain had a major role to play in the middle east crisis. It annoys me immensely when I hear some hon. Members suggesting from both sides of the House that it has nothing to do with us and that we have no influence in that part of the world. I suggest that we have considerable influence.

It is unfortunate that our American allies are tainted with an Israeli bias. They have treated some of their friends in the middle east abysmally recently especially the Jordanians and, to a lesser extent, the Saudis. Therefore, their role in the peace process can be only limited. The Soviet Union has left a nasty taste in the Moslem world, especially in Syria. I do not think that Soviet influence and peacemaking could be anything but biased and, therefore, would not be very productive. The European Community, especially after the Venice declaration, could play a role. I hope that I am not considered unduly critical when I say that the Community is cumbersome when it comes to dealing with foreign affairs. Certain partners, such as the Greeks, take a biased position, and I rather doubt whether the EEC can be the centre of the peacemaking stage.

As I have said, I believe that Britain can have a major influence in the middle east. The courageous initiative taken by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs failed recently, but that was due to no fault of our own. That does not mean that we should not redouble our efforts to do all that we can in the middle east.

It is extraordinarily difficult to find a peace formula, and we shall have setbacks. There will be plenty of evil parties in that part of the world wishing to see us fail. I have in mind the Syrians, the Libyans, the Ayatolla Khomeini and his friends in Iran and certain extremists within the state of Israel. That does not mean that we should not be speaking to our many friends in the middle east, including the moderate Arab states in the Gulf, courageous King Hussein of Jordan and Prime Minister Peres of Israel, who has clearly indicated in the past few weeks that he, his party and his Government wish to see the peace process proceed.

Any peace process must hinge on the West Bank and on the exchange of land for peace. I am a member of the Conservative Friends of Israel and I believe that friends should tell a few home truths occasionally. The Israeli Government's policy and that of the Administration which preceded them of creating new settlements on the West Bank is wrong, misguided and against Israel's interests and can only do damage. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend and his colleagues, when speaking to Mr. Peres, will make that clear. When I was in Israel I had the clear impression that many Israelis were embarrassed about the settlements and could see no moral justification for them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters), who is well qualified to speak on the middle east, said that the Palestinians were divided. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Mr. Spicer) said, it appeared at one time that the majority of West Bankers supported the PLO and Mr. Arafat. I am not sure after the past few weeks whether that is still necessarily true. I was taken with my hon. Friend's idea of setting up a Palestinian Government in exile in Cairo or Tunis made up of representatives of the PLO and other Palestinians who were men of good will with international reputations. We cannot have a peace settlement without the Palestinians recognising a state of Israel and renouncing violence. That must be a prerequisite. It was right for my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary to

[Mr. Andrew MacKay]

insist that that was a prerequisite before the PLO delegation came here. It is only a pity that possibly through lack of communication or some more evil motives the PLO representatives could not sign that declaration.

I urge my Government to continue to do all that they can to ensure that there is a peace settlement in the middle east and to recognise, notwithstanding the recent setbacks, that we have a major role to play. If we do not succeed, the middle east may be the area where the third world war starts. It is an area which could cause immense economic damage to the world in the future. I feel strongly, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West, that time is running out for our friends and the moderate people in the middle east, especially for King Hussein, President Mubarak and Prime Minister Peres. For their sake and the sake of world peace, I hope that the Government will do all that is in their power to try to find a peace settlement.

1.50 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Predictably, we have had a wide-ranging debate, with some startling and amazing contributions. In the brief time available, neither I nor the Minister can cover all the points.

The House will be aware that everything about which we have talked today, whether it be the middle east, development aid, famine, the European Community, Hong Kong or Japan, is overshadowed by the coming summit between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev on the state of East-West relations and the crisis that now affects the world.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) was unfairly disparaged for not showing sufficient interest in the success of the summit. A close re-reading of his speech will show that the Opposition are as interested as anyone in the success of the summit and hope that President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev will manage successfully to deal with the momentous and important issues that will be before them when they eventually meet in Geneva.

The importance of that issue should remind us that tomorrow is the 25th anniversary of the election of President John F. Kennedy to the White House. For those of us who were then still young and junior in politics, that was a momentous occasion for the United States of America, with a change of generation and attitudes in the nuclear age. I came across a quotation the other day from a speech made early in President Kennedy's term of office, which I think is as true today as it was in June 1963, when he said:

"And is not peace in the last analysis, basically a matter of human rights — the right to live out our lives without fear of devastation, the right to breathe air as nature provided it, the right of future generations to a healthy existence?"

In an era when, as my right hon. Friend has so aptly described, we have stockpiles of weapons that could destroy this planet many times, how much truer those words are today than they were then.

All of us, whatever our political complexions, must hope sincerely that those discussions taking place at the highest level between the super-powers will be productive and will lead to a lessening of tension, a reduction in the arms race and a climb-down in the number of arms that both sides feel they must have.

I should like to pose two questions which I do not think the Foreign Secretary sufficiently took on board, but which the Minister for Overseas Development may be able to answer. The first relates to a question that my right hon. Friend asked the Foreign Secretary and to which he chose not to reply. I am sure that the House will be interested in hearing the answer. Did the Prime Minister apologise to President Reagan for the Foreign Secretary's helpful, constructive and widely praised speech about the strategic defence initiative to the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies at the beginning of last year? It is very important to know whether the wise words of the Foreign Secretary represent British Government policy, or whether the rumoured apology to the President of the United States is a fairer reflection of the Prime Minister's acquiescence with United States policy.

Secondly, do the Foreign Secretary and the Government believe that the strategic defence initiative should be a matter for negotiation at the Geneva talks, whether at Secretary-General level or in the continuing arms discussions, in response to the offers that have been made relating to deep cuts? This is fundamental to the outcome of the negotiations. The right hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice) poured cold water on my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East for pointing out the differences that exist between the various Administration spokesmen. This does not require great forensic skill or detective work. The President of the United States and his Secretary of State for Defence are publicly at odds about so fundamental a matter as arms control. The House of Commons deserves to know precisely what is the view of the British Government and what advice the Prime Minister gave to the President of the United States on this important matter.

The Gracious Speech also refers to the European Community. Although the House will have an opportunity next Thursday to consider European Community matters, they are relevant to this debate, for the Gracious Speech states:

"Within the Community, they will work for improved decision taking, strengthened co-operation on foreign policy".

The Foreign Secretary told us that he is pleased with the progress that is being made on the British Government's proposals for foreign policy co-operation within the inter-governmental conference. That is very different from what we were told by the Prime Minister following the Milan summit: that our European Community partners had hijacked the Foreign Secretary's proposals and taken them further, leading to considerable resentment by the Government.

I do not believe that satisfactory progress has been made. Following the Foreign Secretary's presentation paper, after which the European Community embarked on foreign policy co-operation, the first initiative was a united stand on sanctions against South Africa, yet it was the country which claimed authorship of the initiative which, of all the European Community countries, chose to stand aside from that one area of foreign policy co-operation. The statement that the Foreign Secretary's proposals about co-operation are making progress within the inter-governmental conference stretches the belief of hon. Members.

A large number of issues have been raised in the debate. In remarkable speeches, my hon. Friends the Members for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) and for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked serious questions about two separate but very important issues. I doubt whether they will receive answers this afternoon from the Minister

for Overseas Development, but Parliament deserves an answer to their questions. Speeches have been made by other right hon. and hon. Members about Hong Kong, Japan and the middle east. I regret that it is impossible to cover the important matters that they have raised. However, their comments, representing different points of view, should be listened to with care.

The Government's position on South Africa causes widespread anxiety in the House and in the world. Despite all the advances in modern technology, the Prime Minister and the Government cannot have seen the television pictures to which the British people were subjected night after night, until the censors of South Africa's police state rudely turned them off. Perhaps she and the Government were far too busy constructively engaging the controllers of apartheid to make time to see the violent oppression of the black majority, which has caused more than 900 deaths since May 1984. Perhaps she and the Government are too busy working, as she said on 10 October, "through negotiation", to solve that country's crisis.

The Labour party does not scorn such negotiations, but with whom do the Government believe they should negotiate? The Foreign Secretary talked about dealing with black African leaders, but which "genuine leaders" —to quote the Commonwealth document—should be involved in such talks? Only a few years ago, the Government sat down in the comfort of Lancaster house to deal with the leaders of the Patriotic Front in Zimbabwe, while their fighters were actively engaged with the Smith regime. Yet the Government helped to thrash out the new constitution for Zimbabwe. Why do the Government continue to insist that the ANC gives up its armed struggle as a condition of those negotiations? Why cannot the Prime Minister sit down with Oliver Tambo, who addressed the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs two weeks ago, and who was described by the assistant editor of the *Cape Times* in an unprecedented and illegal article as,

"an essentially moderate black leader"?

What are the positive measures ascribed by the Foreign Office to President Botha's futile reforms? Which of those positive measures gives hope to the majority in South Africa that democracy is just around the corner? What is the root of the violence in South Africa, if not apartheid itself? Having been dragged kicking and screaming into accepting, albeit grudgingly, EC and Commonwealth sanctions, the Government still refuse to say what they will do if the South African Government do not, as the Foreign Secretary said in *The Sunday Times* of 13 October,

"convince the world community that it is, even now, tackling the fundamental issues of black political rights and the total abandonment of the concept of apartheid."

That question has been asked even by Conservative Members, and the House deserves an answer to it. What will happen in six months' time?

The Opposition want peaceful change in South Africa. That is why we, with the majority in South Africa, call for sanctions as one of the last remaining options in our power to show not only our moral repugnance at apartheid, but, more importantly, to show President Botha and his allies that the economic pillars that sustain apartheid must be dismantled to force the system's negotiated demise.

If sanctions do not work, why did the Government have them against Ian Smith in Rhodesia? Why did we take part in sanctions against Poland? Why do we still operate sanctions, through COCOM, against the Eastern bloc? If sanctions do not work, why do the Government have a record of trying to make them work?

Today, I came across a remarkable cartoon from an Afrikaaner newspaper, *Die Beeld*, of 22 October 1985. It portrays Mrs. Thatcher as a warrior, holding high her Union Jack shield bravely to defend the apartheid castle against the battering ram of sanctions from the rest of the world. What a true heroine of Afrikaanerdom she has become out there, and how those in Pretoria must have danced round their dining room tables during the Nassau Commonwealth meeting as the Prime Minister brazenly spoke up for inaction. If the British people still do not know the identity of apartheid's friend, the ruling white bloc in South Africa, through its newspapers, certainly does.

As the Foreign Secretary told us earlier, after the Nassau conference the Government appointed his man to the team of Commonwealth eminent people. Of course, the former Chancellor of the Exchequer is a man of truly eminent stature, clear vision, sound judgment and hard work. Or is he? On 11 March 1970, Lord Barber, then Mr. Tony Barber and chairman of the Conservative party, said in Capetown:

"South Africa is our ally and we will treat it as such."

That is what this eminent man, newly appointed to the investigation committee, had to say in 1970. What sort of signal is that to give to our Commonwealth partners? No doubt the British embassy in Pretoria has been besieged with calls from genuine black leaders congratulating the Government on their remarkable choice.

Despite all the Prime Minister's words about the need and urgency for change, the Conservative Government remain a remarkable friend to apartheid. They alone seem to cling vainly to a hope that President Botha's irrelevant reforms will satisfy the majority. However, President Botha has repeated endlessly his commitment to maintaining apartheid's superstructure and rejected any idea of abolishing the Group Areas Act. Instead he asked his President's council to look at ways of improving it — rejecting the council's advice to abolish influx controls. How then can our Government talk continually about "positive measures"? The abolition of two apartheid laws a year leaves 108 years to go before apartheid is demolished and 85 per cent. of the population are given the rights which we consider to be absolutely normal.

The Government offer nothing new in their programme for the forthcoming year regarding the important areas of the Third world and overseas aid. Several hon. Members mentioned the matter this afternoon and, rightly, even the right hon. Member for Daventry raised it remarkably in his otherwise undistinguished speech. He made some damaging criticisms of his Government. I only wish that the Government showed the same concern about overseas aid as do hon. Members and the British people, who have given generously from their pockets for the relief of famine in Africa. But they do not. When the Prime Minister stood on the steps of No. 10 when she took office in 1979, she said:

"Where there is despair, may we bring hope."

She obviously did not mean the Sudan and the slums of Calcutta, any more than she meant the inner cities and dole queues of her new Britain. She soon made clear what she thought of the "handouts"—that is her word—that the Labour Government had spent on making life a little better for and giving hope to the world's poorest people.

[Mr. George Robertson]

Last week the Prime Minister told us again what she thought of overseas aid. She said that any increases that the Government made in overseas aid would mean cuts in other Government spending. What a disgraceful statement from a Prime Minister who has presided over record cuts in overseas aid. The Minister for Overseas Development can wriggle all he likes, but he cannot deny that the aid budget has fallen by 18 per cent. in real terms since 1979, that it fell by 3 per cent. last year, when the British people gave so much for famine relief, and that our aid spending has fallen to the lowest level ever recorded as a proportion of GNP—to 0·33 per cent. which is less than half the United Nations' target, to which the Minister says the Government remain committed. He cannot wriggle from the criticism of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee and its brutal attack on the funding of famine relief in Africa.

The British people want to play their part in famine relief and overseas development. A couple of weeks ago 20,000 of them came here to demonstrate that fact. It is time that the Government registered that and stopped cutting aid. As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) pointed out, the problem of world debt is crippling the economies even of countries to which famine has not yet spread. In sub-Saharan Africa, debt servicing now costs nearly one third of export earnings. Their economies are being strangled by draconian measures imposed on them by Western bankers and the International Monetary Fund. We stand back and pretend that it is all their fault and that if they would only adopt our methods they could climb out of the crisis that has been imposed on them.

When will the Government take up their responsibility to the rest of the world? Will they continue to tell the poor to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps and then insist on the very austerity programmes that are destroying their economies, or will they at long last make a positive gesture? Will Ministers at least discuss the possibility of converting the debts of the poorest countries into grants and relieve them of the burden that prevents real development? Will they take heed of the voices of the 20,000 people who came to the House, and the millions of others who want a Government who care about the poor and the Third world and are prepared to put money rather than just words into ending famine now and preventing it in the future?

2.10 pm

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): It is a bit much for the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), in a debate on foreign affairs and overseas aid which the Opposition asked for, to devote just the last two and a half minutes of his speech to overseas aid and to speak in terms which are palpably outrageous and grossly exaggerated. One cannot help acknowledging that the Opposition spokesman on overseas aid seems to be far away from the House this afternoon, which implies a not very enthusiastic devotion to the cause that the hon. Gentleman has tried to uphold.

We have had an interesting debate. It has been a mixture of wisdom and extremist sensationalism. I do not intend to respond in detail to the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore). He has made allegations about an enormous cast of characters. As far as I could tell, they fell into three groups. The first comprised many individuals whom the hon. Member described as crooks. Those are matters for the police. The second was the Bank of England and the new management of Johnson Matthey Bankers. I remind the House that, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said on 17 July, it was the bank and the management who called in the police. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch also talked of the Government's role. I reject with contempt the hon. Gentleman's allegations and deplore his baseless charge that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is perverting the course of justice. My right hon. Friend told the hon. Gentleman on 24 October:

"If there are any matters for the police to pursue I am confident they will do so. — [*Official Report*, 24 October 1985; Vol. 84, c. *183*.]

We have had a wide-ranging debate. The right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) talked about Sunday trading at one point. That seemed a little far removed from overseas aid and foreign affairs. It also struck me that it was a little rum that he should inveigh so heavily against proposals for reforming the English law on Sunday trading, when it is likely that the reform will be similar to that which is already upheld in Scotland. I am not aware that the right hon. Gentleman has spent his days campaigning for a reform of the Scottish law.

Perhaps more relevant to our debate, the right hon. Gentleman launched a characteristic and passionate plea for more aid and then said that our best action would be to shut off textile imports from the Third world. That also is slightly paradoxical.

Mr. Donald Stewart: The right hon. Gentleman will remember that the Auld report included Scotland, so the proposed legislation is not necessarily confined to England and Wales. As for the multi-fibre arrangement, none of the countries that I have in mind for aid has textile industries.

Mr. Raison: I wonder whether the right hon. Gentleman has heard of a country called Bangladesh, which I assume he wants to aid and which has provided us with an enormous quantity of textiles to which we are responding generously.

We have covered a great deal of ground. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) and my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) made interesting speeches on aspects of far eastern policy, among other matters. Much time has been spent on the problem summarised as "star wars". My hon. Friend for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) made a speech to which the House listened carefully. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) devoted a substantial part of his speech to the star wars problem.

I shall talk primarily about overseas development because it is right that I should do so. I believe the House would want me to consider that matter. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East closed his remarks with the hope that Britain would take the lead in bringing the world back to sanity over nuclear weapons. I assure him that the Government will continue to seek equitable, balanced and verifiable measures of arms control in the nuclear field, as elsewhere. Nothing could be saner than that.

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East asked specifically about American consultation on the latest United States proposals tabled at Geneva. We knew about those detailed proposals in advance. There had been extensive consultations, including President Reagan's meeting on 24 October in New York. Mr. Nitze's meeting

with the North Atlantic Council on 6 November which concentrated on Mr. Shultz's visit to Moscow was a part of that process. We are actively seeking progress with respect to the comprehensive test ban, to which the right hon. Member for Leeds, East referred. In July, we tabled a paper at the conference on disarmament dealing with verification. We know that the technical problems have not yet been resolved. They are important and cannot be swept under the carpet. We believe that it would be premature to resume substantive negotiations on a comprehensive test ban treaty until solutions to these problems have been found.

Although the House listened carefully to the right hon. Member for Leeds, East because he has great experience, I think that it struck many hon. Members as a pity that he did not take account of how much work on space research the Russians had already done. He made a passing reference to it but concentrated the bulk of his attack on the American side. It seemed to me that the way in which he dealt with this matter was very unbalanced.

Mr. Healey: I made it absolutely clear that I endorsed the statement by the Foreign Secretary about the work carried out during the past 20 years by the Soviet Union on ballistic missile defence. I asked the Government to support an initiative to stop further work on both sides of the iron curtain. I had to spend so much time on star wars because, so far, President Reagan has refused to negotiate. He has refused to negotiate on the cessation of work at Krasnoyarsk, Fylingdales and Thule.

Mr. Raison: There is no comparison between the installations at Krasnoyarsk and Fylingdales. An early warning system existed at Fylingdales long before the 1972 ABM treaty. We are confident that the existence and the proposed modernisation of Fylingdales is in full conformity with the obligations of the United States under the ABM treaty.

The House understandably devoted considerable time to the problems in the middle east. Right hon. and hon. Members spoke with great authority, concern and expertise. I do not have the time to pursue this matter in detail but must make one particular point. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East referred to the Prime Minister's remarks in New York about a framework. It is encouraging that Mr. Peres and King Hussein have spoken of the need for an international framework within which peace negotiations could take place. We shall continue to play our part in supporting all constructive moves by the parties concerned.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) and other hon. Members referred to the PLO's role. We continue to believe that the PLO should be associated with the negotiations. That is in line with the Venice declaration.

The Queen's Speech says that the Government

"will give full support to the Commonwealth, and play a constructive role at the United Nations. They will maintain a substantial aid programme; play their part in the relief of famine and of other disasters; and encourage investment in developing countries."

We shall continue to fulfil all those commitments.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice) and my hon. Friends the Members for Westbury and for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) spoke of aid as a moral imperative. I accept that view. Aid gives us advantages—and it is right that it should do so—but a moral imperative lies at the heart of it. Anyone who looks carefully at our aid programme will see that we are fulfilling that moral imperative.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Daventry asked for more money to be provided for the problems in Africa and he is not alone in making that request. By skilful and well directed use of aid resources, we have managed to play a big part in helping to meet famine problems in Africa and we have done so without damaging our long-term development programmes.

In the last financial year, we provided from within the aid programme £95 million of emergency assistance related to the famine in Africa. I have explained to the House previously that we found those funds by drawing on the contingency reserve, which exists to deal with crises, and by making sure that European Community and our own food allocations have been directed overwhelmingly towards the famine problems.

All too often, food aid is not targeted effectively and is provided indiscriminately. The Government have long wanted to get food aid used properly, and I believe that we can claim that by directing our food aid programme sensibly and by encouraging the Community to do likewise we have achieved a heavy concentration of famine relief on Africa without damaging our country programmes. I have never had to say that we must cut back on planned country programmes to meet short-term famine needs. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Daventry will support our approach and agree that the results have been effective.

I do not claim that our aid programme has been immune from the effects of our public expenditure policy. However, the more that people look at what we are doing, the more they will see that our programme is concentrated and is held in high regard throughout the world.

The average aid figure of OECD countries is 0·36 per cent. of gross national product. Our figure is 0·35 per cent. To all intents and purposes, we are in line with other OECD countries. I accept that we have not met the United Nations target, but we hope to move towards that and, in the meanwhile, we are concentrating on the job of providing help most effectively where it is needed throughout the Third world.

Our aid programme is strongly oriented towards poor countries and a crucial factor is that it takes the form not of loans, which serve to generate debt, but of grants. The hon. Member for Hamilton raised that point and I can tell him that, through the mechanism known as retrospective terms adjustment, we have written off the aid debts of 21 countries, to a value of about £1 billion. In that respect, the British aid programme has been one of outstanding value. The ways in which we have generated a strong aid programme owes much to our traditions and experience across the world. I am repeatedly impressed by the high regard in which our experts and technical co-operation officers are held.

I am moved by the way in which our response to the immediate, desperate famine in Africa has been received. We have been criticised at home, but when I talk to the people of the countries involved about the British effort the picture is different. I was visited earlier this week by Major Dawit, the head of the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission who is in charge of the relief operation in Ethiopia. Our differences with the Ethiopian Government are well known. Their politics are far from our politics, but in spite of that Major Dawit told me—far from formally

[Mr. Raison]

—that he was deeply touched by what Britain and the British Government had done for Ethiopia. He also paid tribute to the exceptional work of the Royal Air Force Hercules contingent. I have had the good fortune to fly with the Hercules contingent in Ethiopia on more than one occasion. Seeing the way in which that team worked with such professional efficiency and with a profound humanitarianism is something that I shall never forget and, more important, that the Ethiopians will never forget. Our response to the famine has been of outstanding quality and quantity.

We must go further than deciding how to deal with the present grave famine crisis which is gradually easing as a result of the enormous quantities of food aid provided by the western world. There have been distribution difficulties, but the response has been tremendous. The grain mountains are a weakness of the common agricultural policy and we often criticise them, but if we had not had them it would have been much harder to feed the people of Ethiopia and Sudan in recent months.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): That is not true.

Mr. Raison: There is no question about that. The immediate relief operation is of great importance and it is being conducted with skill and determination. Our minds are now turning to the next phase in the operation—the medium-term rehabilitation process. As the need for food aid diminishes, the next phase is to help to provide seeds for next year's crops, tools, water and machinery. This Government will play a full part in that rehabilitation. We must also think about the longer-term development of Africa. That is the ultimate answer to dealing with the cruel famines.

In spite of the tremendous political difficulties such as the nature of Governments and the several wars raging in some of the countries, a coherent strategy for development is emerging. That will make a difference in the African continent. There is a chance of reversing the pattern of declining food production against an increasing population which is at the heart of the problem. That requires strong co-ordination between the donor countries. We have to agree among ourselves and with the recipient countries on the right policies. That means that those who produce food must receive a proper reward for their efforts. If the farmers are not paid enough they will take refuge in the cities, add to the population pressure and do nothing to solve the problem.

The currencies in recipient countries are characteristically overvalued. That is damaging to tourism and in many other ways. Bureaucracies are out of hand and often incompetent. Left to himself, I am sure that the ordinary African farmer could cope better than he has with all the people sitting on top of him. There is much wisdom in that belief. In other respects we have to help Africa get away from the domination of ideologies that do nothing to bring about effective development in the true sense. To put it bluntly, African Socialism, whatever the ideals associated with it may have been, has proved to be as bad a way of producing food as Socialism in the east of Europe.

It is particularly important to realise that we are not trying to preach from outside. I find myself talking——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed upon Monday 11 November.

Unemployment (Greenock and Port Glasgow)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

2.30 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Throughout my constituency there is a deep anxiety about the bleak economic and social circumstances of thousands of families of unemployed people. Unemployment is souring the lives of the young, the middle aged and the elderly. My constituency is not uniquely blighted. Unemployment in Scotland has doubled since 1979, with the closure of 1,300 companies and the loss of 174,000 jobs in the manufacturing industries. Manufacturing output is still below its 1979 level. Since that year, Scotland has lost one job for every six lost in Great Britain as a whole. Although there has been some growth in employment, unemployment in Scotland has worsened more than in Great Britain as a whole.

Unemployment rates vary among areas. Strathclyde has a current figure of 18·8 per cent., whereas Shetland has a current figure of approximately 5·6 per cent. Long-term unemployment is a major social problem—by that I mean unemployment of over 12 months' duration. It accounts for over 40 per cent. of all unemployed people in Scotland. The view of the Fraser of Allander Institute is, to say the least, gloomy. That institute says:

. . . "it is difficult to foresee any expansion of employment in Scotland that is likely to make any significant inroads into the problem of unemployment."

It is against that national backcloth that I wish to outline the problems in Greenock and Port Glasgow. Under the terms of the old definition of the Greenock travel-to-work area, the number of people unemployed in October 1979 was 5,367, a rate of 11·1 per cent. In October this year male unemployment was 25·4 per cent. and overall unemployment was 21·4 per cent.

There are over 10,000 unemployed people in the Greenock travel-to-work area, which embraces a small part of the constituency represented by the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley). However, over 8,800 of those people live in my constituency and of that figure 3,740 have been unemployed for more than a year. In the Greenock central area, male unemployment is above 35 per cent. and a similar figure obtains for parts of Port Glasgow.

I was given a graphic illustration of the bleak misery and poverty associated with being made unemployed last week in Port Glasgow. It concerns a constituent of mine, Mr. Andy Young, who lives in 36 Sunnyside Avenue, Port Glasgow—a euphoric name for an avenue in Port Glasgow at the moment. He was recently made redundant and told by the Department of Health and Social Security office in Port Glasgow that he would have to wait 10 to 14 weeks for his application for a single bed for his two-year-old daughter to be processed. His other child of six months is still sleeping in her pram. In addition, Mr. Young was given the princely sum of £5.49 by the DHSS office to provide for his wife and two children for one day. On the following day, which was a Saturday, the Giro payment promised by the DHSS failed to arrive and Mr. and Mrs. Young had to seek help from the emergency unit of Strathclyde regional social department. He received £10 to enable the family to exist through Saturday and Sunday until he could seek assistance once more from the DHSS on the Monday.

Another case brought to my attention at 9.30 this morning by telephone concerned a young man of 20, employed by National Semiconductor. I am given to understand that that young man, who has completed two and a half years of a three-year apprenticeship, was told yesterday that he was to be made redundant. That is dreadful treatment, handed out by a firm that has had a good deal of financial assistance from the British state. Those two cases demonstrate the reality of unemployment for my constituents.

I return to the continuing decline of manufacturing industry in my constituency. The following firms have either closed down or drastically reduced the number of their employees in recent years. In 1979 Scott Lithgow dry dock closed, with a loss of 300 jobs. Cowal Engineering closed, with a loss of 81 jobs in the same year. In 1980 Paton and Baldwin closed, with a loss of 533 jobs. In 1981 the Kerr Group closed, with 477 job losses and in the same year VF Corporation closed, with 240 job losses. Charters Marine closed, with the same job loss in the same year. Kerr Electrical closed down with 294 job losses in 1983. Tate and Lyle reduced its work force by 84 in 1984. This year National Semiconductor has dismissed over 500 people. British Shipbuilders, a major employer in my constituency for many years, has dispensed with 4,111 jobs since 5 August 1983.

There has been some growth as well as decline in Greenock and Port Glasgow, reflecting the economic developments and trends in Scotland. For example, IBM now employs about 2,700 people, and, despite the news this week of a temporary reduction in the output of its personal computer, there are to be no redundancies. On the principle that it may be easier to save than to create jobs, I should like to refer to the recent announcements by Scott Lithgow that it is the company's intention to make over 800 employees redundant and Clark Kincaid's announcement that 80 men are to be dismissed because of a lack of orders.

Let me deal with Scott Lithgow first. I have been informed by senior management that the figure of 800 dismissals is contingent upon the company winning orders in the near future. In other words, if those orders do not materialise, more men will go. That is the blunt message that I was given. Therefore, it is essential that Scott Lithgow obtains Ministry of Defence orders in the shape of new conventional submarines. The Government could assist Clydeside communities by sending Ministry of Defence orders for surface vessels to Yarrow in Glasgow and submarine orders to Scott Lithgow.

May I inform the Minister of the new circumstances of Scott Lithgow? In terms of job flexibility, productivity and industrial relations, there has been a significant change in the company. In job flexibility, the yard is ahead of all other yards in Great Britain. The Secretary of State acknowledged the positive and welcome changes that have taken place at Scott Lithgow when he recently met a delegation from the Inverclyde district council.

I would happily invite the Minister, and his ministerial colleagues at the Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Defence, to visit Scott Lithgow and meet the management and work force. If they were to accept that invitation, they would quickly perceive a new sense of realism that exhibits itself in collective bargaining.

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

I have several questions to ask the Minister, and I acknowledge that he may not be able to answer some of them today. In the light of the Cabinet's decision concerning the budget allocations for different Departments, will Scott Lithgow receive the orders, which are desperately needed, to build conventional submarines? I assure the Minister and his colleagues that those submarines would be built to first-class standards and would be delivered on or before the specified and agreed delivery dates.

Clark Kincaid—formerly John G. Kincaid, a very old and famous Clydeside engine builder—recently built the engine for the Cunard ship to replace the Atlantic Conveyor which was sunk in the Falklands conflict. Cunard was delighted with the performance of Clark Kincaid in building that engine. Clark Kincaid is now literally the last engine builder on the Clyde and the River Tyne. I was deeply and bitterly disappointed that the Cunard company chose a German marine engine builder to construct the nine engines that are to be fitted into the Queen Elizabeth II in a West German shipyard. Far too many orders go abroad, to the detriment of British industry. I should say "industry in the United Kingdom", because Harland and Wolff in Belfast or Clark Kincaid could have built those engines.

Large numbers of British industrialists and companies seem to have taken to heart Dr. Johnson's apothegm that patriotism is for the scoundrel only. Speaking as one such scoundrel, I say that orders should be placed nearer home. In that connection, I am deeply concerned at the behaviour of the members of the board of Caledonian MacBrayne and that company's chief executive. In the past 15 months, they have placed vessel orders with Humberside shipyards worth just under £10 million. Both Ferguson and Ailser of Port Glasgow and Troon and Hall Russell of Aberdeen, two excellent companies, are in desperate need of orders. Will the Minister comment on that disgraceful trend?

I received a letter recently from the Minister which seemed to accept the chief executive's claim that there was a substantial difference between the success of Humberside tenders and the unsuccessful Scottish bids. Since I received the hon. Gentleman's letter, two more orders have floated down to the Humber. Will he comment on those substantial differences? Is he concerned that Scottish yards are losing Scottish orders?

I should be grateful if the Minister would say a word or two about the circumstances surrounding the National Semiconductor company. Is he confident that it will escape from its current difficulties and expand in Greenock, as predicted by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland?

I and many of my constituents would be interested to hear what the Minister has to say about the Inverclyde initiative. Can he give me an assurance that the Inverclyde district will obtain a fair share of the jobs generated by the Locate in Scotland unit? There are those in Scotland who believe that the new towns benefit from positive discrimination in the creation of jobs by that unit. If that is a myth, I am sure that the Minister will be pleased to blow it away this afternoon.

During a speech last Friday evening in Greenock, Mr. Ian Wilson, the chief executive of Inverclyde district council, said:

"Inverclyde is at an economic crossroads. I believe that we can turn along the road of economic recovery. The road will be uphill and the effort required will be great, but it is not beyond our capabilities."

I share his anxiety, his faith in the community and his hopes for the future. However, a great deal rests with the Government, in the shape of the Scottish Office.

I am looking not for charity, but for assistance. Among other things, we need MOD orders for Scott Lithgow in the shape of conventional submarines—the SKK2400 type. We need a much larger state investment in the Inverclyde initiative; the state is not putting enough into it. The Scottish Development Agency must do a great deal more, rather than being brought in as a rescue agency when job losses are reported on the front pages of newspapers. We want a more sympathetic and constructive response from the Scottish Office towards those developing community businesses, self-help agencies and others seeking to promote both services and jobs in our communities. The Government must give assistance now.

Is it the Government's intention to increase the financial resources required for the renovation of Scotland's decaying council houses? Greenock and Port Glasgow, as two communities, are in desperate need of such financial assistance. If a decision to give that sort help was taken, that would improve the health and welfare of the tenants and would create more jobs.

2.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) for taking this opportunity to raise a matter of some concern to his constituents, and which is also of concern to Government and non-Government agencies, which, as I am sure he realises, are working hard to alleviate the unemployment problems of the area that he represents.

The Government share the hon. Gentleman's worries about the level of unemployment in his constituency. I am sure that we all appreciate some of the problems that he so graphically illustrated in terms of individual cases. He raised a series of important questions and I shall try to answer as many of them as possible in the time available. Any that I am not able to deal with will be answered in writing.

The hon. Gentleman's last question related to housing. I am sure he is aware that last year, on the housing revenue account allocation, an increase of nearly 25 per cent. was made available across Scotland. I understand that Inverclyde benefited considerably from that increase. I am sure that, in fairness, the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that that increase has been of considerable benefit to his constituency.

It is important to understand the special combination of circumstances which has brought about the situation which the hon. Gentleman has described in his constituency. It is not a new phenomenon, and certainly not one which has magically appeared since 1979. A look at the background to the problem will reveal its underlying causes and complexities and why it cannot be resolved by the simple expedient of throwing more and more money at it.

The Inverclyde area has a long history of employment difficulties. Between 1971 and 1981, during a period which saw little change up or down in the employment

position elsewhere in Scotland, the area lost substantial numbers of jobs. These job losses were the early signs of a basic weakness in the local economy and its vulnerability to the effects of the fundamental structural changes which were beginning to work their way through the British economy at large. The weakness, of course, is the area's dependence on a narrow manufacturing base and on shipbuilding in particular.

Manufacturing has been in steady decline since the 1960s, but the rate of contraction has accelerated as a result of the loss of our international competitiveness—the competitiveness which the Government's economic policies are designed to restore and which we are beginning to see restored. In 1981 the manufacturing sector in Inverclyde accounted for 39 per cent. of local employment, compared with 25 per cent. for Scotland as a whole. For this reason alone, the area was particularly exposed to the chill winds of international economic change.

There were other weaknesses in Inverclyde's economic structure. One of these was, and still is, the area's reliance on the fortunes of just a few large companies, notably Scott Lithgow, IBM and National Semiconductor. In 1981 establishments with more than 200 employees provided 57 per cent. of Scottish manufacturing output, whereas in Inverclyde the figure was a decidedly risky 83 per cent. Of course, the reliance of the local employment scene on three large companies brought substantial benefits to the area, which must be recognised. Indeed, while shipbuilding may have been of much reduced importance in recent years, it still provides substantial employment. Electronics, the other main source of manufacturing employment, has, until very recently at least, had a very favourable impact on local employment trends. Over the years these large industrial units have made available a wide range of employment opportunities which might not otherwise have existed in a town which saw its original locational advantages largely disappear with the decline of North Atlantic maritime trade and passenger traffic.

The danger, however, has always been that a setback suffered for whatever reason by one or other of the big three and causing it to shed labour would be felt keenly throughout the community. Because of the world recession in merchant shipbuilding, Scott Lithgow has shed jobs in the past three and a half years. Having said that, even with the recent redundancies at Scott Lithgow, the present level of employment is about what was envisaged for the long term when Trafalgar House took over the yard. Despite what the hon. Gentleman has said, this is surely better than the total closure which seemed to be on the cards in 1984. For the future, the yard must continue to bid for orders in competition with other yards at home and abroad.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow referred to submarine orders. A decision on the submarine order must await completion of the detailed assessment of tenders, which inevitably takes some time. The Government's decision must of course be based on sound economic criteria.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the recent Calmac orders for two ferries. The ordering of these two small ferries was within the delegated authority of the Scottish Transport Group, and the decision on the contract is based on its commercial judgment.

I shall now deal with the electronics industry. We regret the current downturn in demand for silicon chips and semiconductors, but, given that circumstance, it is all the more important that companies remain committed and receive our support to long-term investment in the latest equipment. This provides the best protection for employment and we must give these companies our wholehearted support. In the course of this year there have been difficulties facing the industry as a whole, in the US and in Europe. We in Scotland have not been immune from those difficulties, but it would be perverse in the extreme to ignore the brighter long-term prospects for the electronics industry and the leading position which Scotland has established as a major European centre for the manufacture of integrated circuits. The difficulties at National Semiconductor are disappointing, but, taking a longer perspective, as we must, it is encouraging that the company's massive investment programme remains in place. I am glad that the company remains committed to that programme and our commitment in the Government to supporting National Semiconductor should match that of the company.

The announcement earlier this week in the press that IBM is to cut production but not jobs must be looked at in an entirely different light. The scale of its difficulties is completely different and is minor by comparison. Effectively, it is adjusting production to match a fluctuation in its market. I am sure that I do not need to remind the hon. Member of IBM's contributions to the world economy, and in particular to the west of Scotland, where at Greenock it has its most consistently profitable plant in Europe. We believe that there are still major opportunities in electronics and in the silicon technology which is fundamental to success. I am glad to say that this is not just a Government view, but is backed by companies as significant as Digital, NEC and Hughes, all of which have announced very substantial investment programmes.

Dr. Godman: I share the Minister's sentiments about IBM. I thought I had made it clear that I had confidence in IBM and that I had no worries on that score.

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. It is important to underline that point, because it is essential to confidence within his area.

I have taken some pains to point out that the picture of employment in Inverclyde is not as black as the hon. Member has painted. For example, since May 1979 offers of selective assistance in Greenock and Port Glasgow have amounted to nearly £22 million to bring on projects worth over £463 million, creating and safeguarding over 7,000 jobs, and if we look at Renfrewshire this year, we see that companies have committed investment or won contracts totalling well over £76 million—over £7·5 million every month. Nevertheless, I do not pretend that there is not a serious problem to be tackled.

Our priority is to achieve a healthier balance between the manufacturing and service sectors. The latter, which has been relatively buoyant nationally and holds out some of the best prospects of future economic growth, is under-represented in the area, where it provides only 55 per cent. of jobs locally, compared with 62 per cent. in Scotland as a whole. In addition, services in the area have grown more slowly than their Scottish counterparts. Contraction of the area's manufacturing base has led to a loss of markets for industrial services, and population outflow has impeded the growth of consumer services. I am therefore surprised that out of 8,500 applications for our better business

[Mr. Ancram]

services and better technical services schemes only a handful have come from Greenock—Port Glasgow or indeed Inverclyde in general.

A deep-rooted economic imbalance of this kind cannot be rectified overnight. The hon. Gentleman is aware that the Government believe that the long-term solution to the problem lies in the Inverclyde initiative, which is being promoted by the Scottish Development Agency, as the main vehicle for measures to assist the area. Its object is to provide new, permanent jobs through the regeneration and diversification of the economic base—an aim which cannot be faulted. The hon. Gentleman would like the Government's cash contribution to the initiative to be much higher, but I assure him that increasing the financial input would not have the effect that he seeks. The Scottish Development Agency is giving the initiative high priority, but rightly insists that expenditure must be on viable schemes which give a return to the local economy. At the present stage the main need is not for vast sums of money but for viable projects. It may well take some time to develop these and they will require the wholehearted and active support of the community and the local authorities. I cannot overemphasise the importance of that.

The hon. Gentleman is aware that there are many other important initiatives within his area, not least the venture groups, and it is only time that precludes my dealing with them.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman and others in the House will agree that the Inverclyde initiative is a comprehensive, imaginative and above all logical action programme which ensures that resources will be deployed to maximum effect in accordance with the carefully identified needs of the area, both present and future. It is certainly a more sensible approach than a purely speculative injection of large sums of money, and holds out the best hope that there is of rebuilding the area's economic base on sound foundations. I think that that will provide a more secure future for the hon. Gentleman's constituents.

The Question having been proposed at half-past Two o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House, without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 11 November 1985

The House met at half-past Two o-clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members may have noticed on the Order Paper two small but significant misprints in the two Provisional Order Bills: in the text of the titles of the two Bills, the words "Peterhead" and "Lothian" have been transposed.

I invite the Minister to move the presentation of the two Bills in the corrected form.

LOTHIAN REGION (EDINURGH WESTERN RELIEF ROAD)

Mr. Secretary Younger presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 8 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road); And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered upon Tuesday 19 November and to be printed. [Bill 8.]

PETERHEAD HARBOURS (SOUTH BAY DEVELOPMENT)

Mr. Secretary Younger presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 8 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Peterhead Harbours (South Bay Development); And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered upon Tuesday 19 November and to be printed. [Bill 7.]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Concessionary Fares

1. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the criteria he intends to use in exercising his power under the Transport Act 1985 with regard to the granting of exemptions from certain requirements in relation to arrangements for concessionary travel schemes and with regard to the form, content and manner of service of certain notices in connection with such schemes; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): My right hon. Friend will be laying regulations before the House shortly dealing with the reimbursement of operators for providing transport concessions. His criteria in making the regulations, and in considering applications made under them, will be to safeguard the proper interests of operators and authorities.

Mr. Greenway: May I have an assurance that free travel passes for elderly, blind and disabled people will continue in the Greater London area after the abolition of the GLC in April 1986? May I further be assured that they will continue, and be fully operational, as of now, starting at 9 am? Will my hon. Friend repudiate the wicked lies that have been put about at public expense by the GLC for nearly three years that travel passes will be abolished after the abolition of the GLC?

Mr. Mitchell: Concessionary fares in London are currently a matter of GLC policy executed by LRT. After April, either the boroughs will get together and organise their own scheme applying to all boroughs uniformly, or there will be the operation of the fall-back scheme if there is no agreement. That scheme provides statutory provisions which come into play at broadly the existing level of benefit administered by LRT, but billed to the boroughs. I can, therefore, give my hon. Friend the assurance that he is seeking. Indeed, I am very angry, as must be many hon. Members, at the way in which thousands of pensioners have been needlessly worried as the result of a political campaign that they would lose their concessions. Pensioners have been used in the worst sense of that word.

Mr. Tony Banks: It has taken us a long time to force that concession out of the Government—*[Interruption.]*—who could have put the mind of pensioners at ease much earlier. At what levels will boroughs be able to charge pensioners for the administration of schemes? That will cost pensioners money, will it not?

Mr. Mitchell: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question about pensioners' minds being set at rest is that if he and some of his colleagues had not flagrantly misled them, their minds would not have been in any state of unease, especially in view of assurances that were given during the passage of the Bill through the House, when the position was made absolutely clear.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Further to my hon. Friend's reply to the main question and his comments about words of reassurance to pensioners having been given on previous occasions, despite suggestions to the contrary, may I nevertheless ask him to say why it was not possible to go as far in the West Midlands metropolitan area as apparently it has been possible to go in the GLC area? Is he aware that similar assurances would be welcomed by the people of the west midlands?

Mr. Mitchell: That is entirely a matter for the locally-elected voices, through the PTA, in the west midlands. It is up to them to decide how they wish to spend their resources.

Mr. Corbett: What level of charges does the Minister expect will be levied? Will he intervene in the west midlands and explain to the people there why they should have a second-class service?

Mr. Mitchell: There is no reason why people in the west midlands should have a second-class service as a result of the proposals in what is now the Act. The expenditure levels permitted for PTAs are intended to allow for the continuation of concessionary fare schemes at existing levels of provision. The campaign led by some Opposition Members to frighten pensioners into assuming that those resources would not be available has been disgraceful.

Mr. Stott: I repudiate the Minister's hysterical response, because he must be aware that we have never said that concessionary fares would disappear completely. We have said, as has been pointed out by hon. Members already, that the concessionary fares that our constituents enjoy are seriously at risk as a result of the Government's legislation. Will my constituents in Greater Manchester still enjoy the same level of financial support towards their concessionary rail and bus travel as the constituents of the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway)?

Mr. Mitchell: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that there will be sufficient resources for the PTAs to provide the same level of support as in the past. Whether they choose to do so is a matter for them to decide, and not for the Government to dictate.

M25

2. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the long-term benefits of the M25 circular motorway around London.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): The M25 will provide a more convenient, quicker and safer route round London for through traffic. It will give easier access to ports and airports on motorway class roads, and will relieve communities in London and the south-east of through traffic, noise and congestion. It will yield substantial economic benefits.

Mr. Jessel: Apart from the benefit to millions of M25 users, is my right hon. Friend aware, if a one-day traffic count is anything to go by, that Uxbridge road, Hampton Hill, which is now bypassed by the M25, has already seen a 10 to 15 per cent. drop in volume of traffic since 1983? How much will the roads in Greater London be relieved of heavy lorry traffic?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support, and I can confirm that a recent traffic count in the area that he mentioned showed a reduction of 14 per cent. of total traffic because of the completion of the M25 to the west and south of London. Our estimate is that the M25 will reduce lorry mileage in London by between 20 and 25 per cent.

Dr. McDonald: Is the Secretary of State aware that parts of the M25 near my constituency of Thurrock are still unlit and that this may be dangerous and cause accidents? Is he also aware that providing cable ducting in the course of motorway construction makes it easier and cheaper to provide lighting? Has that cable ducting been provided throughout the M25? If not, will the Secretary of State make sure that it is provided in the construction of the last part of the M25 and other motorways?

Mr. Ridley: Parts of the M5 through my constituency are not lit. The criteria for lighting motorways are whether it adds to safety to do so and whether it is worth the large extra cost. I cannot tell the hon. Lady that I have noticed whether ducting has been installed in the sections to which she referred, and I shall write to let her know. We do not intend to light all motorways, only those parts where lighting increases safety.

Mr. Higgins: I welcome the benefits of the M25, but is my right hon. Friend aware that there are dangers if the motorway becomes used as a race track? Is he further aware that when using it at any time of the week I find myself the only person doing 70 mph, while many cars are doing well over 100? At the very least, will my right hon. Friend speak to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary about enforcement and putting up signs that read "70 mph", rather than have just a black bar across them?

Mr. Ridley: I share my right hon. Friend's concern about excessive speeds on all motorways, not just the M25. My hon. Friend the Minister will be engaging in a debate on this subject soon, so that she can go into it in greater detail. We are in constant touch with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary about enforcement, and we are busy considering what to do to alleviate the mounting pressures and concerns that my right hon. Friend has expressed.

London Regional Transport

3. **Sir John Page** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of London Regional Transport, he will raise the subject of the progress being made by London Regional Transport towards achieving the objectives set by the Government in 1984.

Mr. Ridley: London Regional Transport's excellent progress towards achieving the Government objectives is regularly discussed whenever I meet the chairman. LRT is well on course to achieve all the targets we have set it. In particular, it is forecasting a sustained reduction in real unit costs of at least the target figure of 2·5 per cent. a year and the earlier achievement of its target to halve revenue support. Fares continue to keep broadly in line with inflation.

Sir John Page: I thank my right hon. Friend for the good news that he has just given. What further steps is LRT considering to improve efficiency and, therefore, to reduce costs to London's travellers and ratepayers? Bearing in mind the many moving services of remembrance throughout London yesterday, when the Secretary of State next meets the chairman will he discuss with him the possibility of LRT buses coming to a halt during the two minutes' silence, as that might set a trend for other road users?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. LRT has embarked on a major programme of cost-cutting investment, including a new Underground ticketing system, new sources of power supply and increasing use of one-person operation on buses and Underground trains. It is pursuing a vigorous programme of putting bus services out to tender, which on current evidence provides the opportunity of savings of up to 20 per cent. As to my hon. Friend's other suggestion, I agree about the moving nature of yesterday's events at 11 o'clock, and I shall certainly bring what he has said to the attention of the chairman of LRT.

Mr. Spearing: Is it the Government's policy to cut the wages of London bus drivers in the outer areas? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there is a risk of that happening with the contractors of LRT and with LRT itself? If it is not the Government's policy, will he make sure that those contracting for such routes keep to London wages, and that LRT does the same?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman knows that these are matters for the management of LRT to work out in

consultation with the unions. It is odd to hear him griping at the possibility of less subsidy, possibly even cheaper bus fares, through greater efficiency, but how that is achieved is for negotiation.

Mr. Squire: None the less, does my right hon. Friend agree that the achievements that he has just detailed have been in the face of campaigns in relation to excessive fare increases which did not take place and in relation to alleged station closures which also did not occur? Will he underline that this is the sort of thing that we in London must put up with?

Mr. Ridley: I shall never forget the nonsense talked during the passage of the London Regional Transport Bill —[HON. MEMBERS: "By the right hon. Gentleman."]— about station closures, a 25 per cent. increase in fares and the ending of concessionary bus passes. The Opposition did not believe that it was possible to achieve the efficiency improvements that LRT has already achieved. That really showed up the Opposition, particularly the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), as wholly ill-informed and ill-briefed.

Mr. Robert Hughes: The right hon. Gentleman has waxed so eloquent about the objectives that he has set that it almost seemed as though he was leading us to the promised land. However, is not the reality one of continuing job losses and an outrageous proposal to cut the wages of some bus men by £40 a week, or 30 per cent.? Would not the right hon. Gentleman do much better to call in LRT and tell it to reverse his costly decentralisation proposals as a far better way of saving money and becoming more efficient?

Mr. Ridley: I first welcome the hon. Gentleman back to transport issues. He had that responsibility in a previous incarnation. We look forward to many attempts at educating him in the coming years. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be careful of other occupations that he undertakes, because we do not want to lose him prematurely.

It seems that the hon. Gentleman does not know a promised land when he sees one. LRTs extraordinary performance improvement not only shows how well managed London's transport is, but how extraordinarily badly managed it was under the GLC.

Road Maintenance

4. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on the level of local authority expenditure on road maintenance.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): Provision for local authority expenditure on road maintenance in 1985-86 is £972 million, 15 per cent. more than the level of provision two years earlier. I expect authorities to spend that sum. I shall be announcing the provision for 1986-87 very shortly, at the time of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's autumn statement.

Mr. Speller: I congratulate my hon. Friend and the Government on the increase in spending, but do they realise that rural and local roads are, in many cases, more important than motorways to those of us in the backwoods? Will the Government continue to spend more on providing easy access to the motorways for those of us who currently do not have that advantage?

Mrs. Chalker: I understand my hon. Friend's concern, but regret that I cannot give him the answer that he seeks. I am very well aware that the geography of the south-west means that the relatively few lines of road communication are vital for its economic health. We are increasing the number of those road lines by constructing an entirely new road, the north Devon link. As hon. Members know, we are doing everything that we can to relieve the main bottleneck of the A30.

Mr. Cartwright: What is the Minister's response to last July's report of the National Audit Office suggesting that the backlog of motorway maintenance will take seven years to complete, that spending on trunk roads maintenance is less then half of what is needed, and that additional investment now will produce savings in future?

Mrs. Chalker: I should be delighted to tell the hon. Gentleman what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will tell him tomorrow, but it is not my job to do so. There has been a 15 per cent. increase during the past few years. If that had been combined with all local and highway authorities producing the efficiency that they are now achieving with our programme, there would have been an even greater benefit.

We have great scope for achieving better value for money from road maintenance. The Audit Commission is just beginning a major study in that very area. I very much welcome that, because we can then achieve even better value for money.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Is my hon. Friend aware that the substructure of rural roads has been allowed to break up as a result of the illegal target system imposed by the Government on local authorities and an inadequate level of TPP? Therefore, will it not require more than a 15 per cent. increase to bring the roads back to their proper condition? It is the destruction of the substructure, rather than damage to the surface, that must be repaired now, and 15 per cent. will not do the job.

Mrs. Chalker: I am sure my hon. Friend will remember that the Select Committee on Transport recommended a 10 per cent. increase in real terms in provision. As I said, that matter will be dealt with tomorrow.

I am very well aware that it is important to make the sort of provision that will deter further deterioration. That is exactly what we have done by producing the code of good practice for local authorities, and we shall continue to encourage them to do the very things that my hon. Friend has requested.

Mr. Haynes: The Secretary of State is a disaster, although the Minister of State is all right — [HON. MEMBERS: "Sexist".]—The Secretary of State has plenty to say here, so why does he not open his mouth during Cabinet meetings at No. 10 and obtain money for road maintenance?

Is the Minister aware that police and local authority reports state that bad road maintenance contributes more than anything else to road accidents?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman is not being his customary self. My right hon. Friend is an excellent Secretary of State.

I cannot, for the reasons that I have already given, answer the hon. Gentleman's question. He has not drawn the right conclusion. If all drivers kept within the speed

limits and observed what was happening on the roads, rather than thinking of other matters, there would be fewer accidents.

We shall continue to put forward the necessary resources for necessary road maintenance. I have every confidence that that will happen.

Inter-city Services

5. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the performance of British Rail's inter-city travel.

Mr. David Mitchell: The day-to-day performance of the inter-city sector is a matter for the railways board.

Dr. Marek: Nevertheless, I hope that the Minister cares about British Rail's inter-city performance. Is he aware that under British Rail's 1986 inter-city timetable trains will generally take longer to reach their destination, stop at more intermediate stations and that there will be less choice for travellers? Is he further aware that inter-city trains are overcrowded and that, more often than not, buffet and restaurant facilities are not available? Does he agree that that is unsatisfactory? Will he take up the matter urgently with the chairman of British Rail?

Mr. Mitchell: We certainly care about the level of service on inter-city trains. The hon. Gentleman complains about inter-city trains stopping at intermediate stations. I hope that he observes the contradiction in his remarks, because the additional stops provide an additional service for members of the public who want to travel on inter-city services.

British Rail is examining the possibilities of more private sector activity in the provision of buffet services. I have no doubt that that will lead to the improvements for which the hon. Gentleman is looking. I congratulate him on his appointment to the Front Bench as Opposition spokesman for health.

Mr. Gregory: When my hon. Friend next meets the chairman of British Rail to discuss inter-city services, will he take up the possibility of cyclists continuing to be able to take their cycles on inter-city trains, since that facility is threatened? Will he also suggest that buffets should be open from the time that a train departs, not 30 minutes later after card playing has ended?

Mr. Mitchell: The problem of cycles on inter-city trains is one of space for accommodation. I shall write to my hon. Friend further about that. I shall draw the attention of the chairman of BR to my hon. Friend's words about the opening and closing of buffet services.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Minister aware that the chairman of British Rail has categorically refused to give cheap early-day travel to passengers travelling from Stoke on Trent, even though he gives that facility to passengers from Manchester and Stockport on the same line? Does he agree that that is extraordinary discrimination by the chairman of British Rail, and will he take up the matter with him?

Mr. Mitchell: I shall draw the chairman's attention to what the right hon. Gentleman has said. I am sure that it is not British Rail's intention to discriminate against his constituents.

Mr. Pawsey: Will my hon. Friend raise with the chairman of British Rail the question of punctuality, particularly the punctuality of trains at intermediate stations rather than termini? I am sure that he will discover that the punctuality at such stations is very bad indeed.

Mr. Mitchell: One of the objectives set for British Rail by the Secretary of State was a reliable, attractive and punctual service. British Rail recognises that it still has some way to go. Since the remodelling of Crewe station there has been some improvement on the west coast main line. I recognise that my hon. Friend's campaign on behalf of his constituents is desirable. I shall draw the chairman's attention to what he said about timekeeping at intermediate stations.

Mr. Snape: Does the Minister accept that inter-city punctuality tables — at least, the latest ones — are the worst for almost 20 years, that despite what he has just said the timekeeping of trains from Euston on the west coast main line is deplorable, that morale in the railway industry is at rock bottom and that, thanks to the stewardship of the Secretary of State, the right hon. Gentleman has proved himself unfit to take down engine numbers let alone undertake responsibility for a once great industry?

Mr. Mitchell: I so much regret the fact that the hon. Gentleman turns up at every Question Time, no matter what the questions are about, and carps about British Rail instead of praising it for what it has achieved. It runs more trains at over 100 miles an hour than any other railway system in the world. As for timekeeping, the hon. Gentleman is quite wrong when he says that it is the worst ever. There has been a significant improvement in recent months.

Dial-a-ride Services

6. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements are being made to ensure the continuation of dial-a-ride services for the disabled in London following the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mrs. Chalker: We have secured powers in the Transport Act 1985 to enable London Regional Transport to make grants for the provision of dial-a-ride services. A specific allocation of £5 million will be made for this purpose within my right hon. Friend's overall grant to London Regional Transport.

Mr. Dykes: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, which provides a necessary reassurance after our many anxieties. As background to these anxieties, which are felt all over London, including Harrow, can she say, on the scale of bad politics, that which she regrets the most— the Government's unwise decision to abolish the GLC, which we set up in the first place, or Dave Wetzel's irresponsible use of these anxieties to create scare stories?

Mrs. Chalker: I do not agree with my hon. Friend's first proposition. The second obviously stands. There was no doubt whatever in my mind that it was right to provide for the most severely disabled people by continuing dial-a-ride services, and I am delighted that they will have the professional backing of London Regional Transport to help them become even more efficient.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Minister aware that she has effectively frozen the level of funding at a point which

means that dial-a-ride will be unable to expand after the abolition of the GLC, and that this cannot be good for disabled people in London? I have a letter here from the Prime Minister in which she says that she will ensure, through the Department of Transport, that both dial-a-ride and the taxicard service will be preserved. Will the Minister give an assurance from the Dispatch Box now that the GLC's taxicard service for people with those disabilities will also be retained after the abolition of the GLC?

Mrs. Chalker: I can assure the House that the £5 million put forward for the dial-a-ride service is sufficient to maintain the service in 1986-87, and with this the London borough's working party has agreed fully. It will be up to dial-a-ride, with the help of LRT, to achieve the better efficiency that will allow expansion of the system.

The taxicard service has been costing ratepayers around £5 million. It is a service where the boroughs, following the GLC, have power to grant-aid the service of concessionary fares. It is in the Transport Act 1985. It will be up to boroughs, which are now discussing it, to do so. All councils are being sounded out and will report back to their co-ordinating committee on 27 November. It is, however, blatantly unfair of the GLC to come up at this stage with proposals that will double the cost to the London ratepayers of a scheme which would not be right and one which would not help all those people whom we wish to help. I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that this high-cost scheme, which his GLC is setting up, is meant to provoke anxiety and to be an embarrassment to the boroughs. I hope that everyone recognises it for what it is worth.

A1 (Safety)

7. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on safety on the A1.

Mrs. Chalker: Overall, the A1 continues to have an accident rate below the national average. The recently revised national road programme contains 10 major schemes designed to improve the safety of the road still further. These are in addition to five major schemes completed since 1979 and a continuing programme of smaller, but nonetheless important, local improvements.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend will recall telling me in earlier correspondence that the A1 has a good safety record. Since then, however, there have been a number of serious accidents, including the death of an entire family in a cross-over accident. Does she agree that the A1 is dangerous and that it lulls motorists into a false sense of security? It is not as safe as a motorway, with its long stretches without a central safety barrier or hard shoulder, with cross-over points and poor sight lines obscuring slow-moving traffic. Will she commit the Government to a full-scale programme of improving road safety on the A1, and particularly to extending safety barriers?

Mrs. Chalker: I am fully committed to improving road safety, not merely on the A1, but on all roads. This year I have instituted a review of all safety fencing, which may be of assistance to the A1. Furthermore, it does not matter on what road one drives, or what the road conditions are, because much of road safety is in the hands of drivers. Nothing that the House may try to persuade me to do or that the Government do will change the fact that at present 65 per cent. of accidents are caused by driver error only.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Would not safety on the A1 be substantially improved if there were a switch to rail? However, before that development takes place, and in the light of anxiety throughout the country about the standards of British Rail, may we have a full inquiry——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about safety on the A1.

National Roads Programme

8. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the national roads programme.

Mr. Ridley: Last Friday.

Mr. Jones: When, in future, my right hon. Friend meets the CBI, will he concentrate on the differences between his programme and that which the CBI proposes in "Fabric of the Nation"? Will he explain why there is such an enormous discrepancy between its proposal and his programme?

Mr. Ridley: There are no great differences between our forward programme and "Fabric of the Nation II", which the CBI has proposed. In most cases where they are not the same, either we are studying a new scheme to meet the CBI's requirements, or we think that the schemes that we have adjacent to its demands are meeting the need in a different way. There are few schemes that do not fall into one or other category.

Mr. Faulds: Are the Government prepared to listen to the strictures of—is it Sir Anthony Beckett?—on the Government's failure to invest in the infrastructure?

Mr. Ridley: I do not quite know who Sir Anthony Beckett can be. *[Interruption.]* That may be the hon. Gentleman's stage name. I addressed the CBI last Friday, and would be delighted to send the hon. Gentleman a copy of my speech so that he can comprehend fully the extent to which we are meeting the nation's needs for a modern road system.

Motorway Safety

9. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding motorway safety following the accident on the M6 on 21 October; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I have received some 1,000 letters from members of the public, and 33 from hon. Members. Although motorways remain our safest roads, there is still scope for improvements in driver behaviour. As the House knows, I am looking particularly at every aspect of the safety and speed of vehicles on motorways, especially coaches. I shall announce our conclusions on this as soon as possible.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend tell the House the most helpful things that drivers could do to prevent accidents on motorways?

Mrs. Chalker: If drivers would slow down and keep a safe distance behind the vehicle in front—that means an even longer distance at night and in bad weather—there would be far fewer accidents.

Mr. Bagier: Does the Minister agree that speeding and bad driving on motorways are often encouraged by the lack

of a police presence? Will she consult her right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to make certain that motor vehicles manned by the police are on motorways to ensure that the laws are obeyed?

Mrs. Chalker: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I am already doing so, and I am having further meetings about enforcement. If people drive safely only when they see a car with stripes down the side and a blue lamp on top, we shall still have accidents that are avoidable. It behoves every driver to improve his driving and his lane discipline. I hope that this awful series of crashes will bring home to people how much they have to do to avert such terrible tragedies.

Mr. Stephen Ross: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not a bit of a record that we have reached only question No. 9?

Mr. Speaker: No, it is not a record.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take points of order later.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take points of order later.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

City Fraud

60. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Attorney-General whether he has discussed the question of City fraud with the Director of Public Prosecutions; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): Yes. I frequently meet the Director of Public Prosecutions and senior members of his staff to discuss the work of his Department. The scope of these discussions includes the handling of fraud investigations generally, as well as individual cases of particular difficulty or importance.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Solicitor-General recall that several months ago the Attorney-General said to a Tory Member of Parliament that he found the level of City fraud unacceptable? Since then we have had revelations about people connected with Johnson Matthey, and we now know that Peter Cameron-Webb and his associates who ran the PCW syndicate at Lloyds managed to get away with £70 million and are now living a life of luxury on the other side of the Atlantic. Why is it that the Attorney-General and the DPP seem to have one law for bankers and city financiers and another one under which, when he is called upon to nod through the Cyprus war trials, he can give the go-ahead? When Clive Ponting's case was brought before him, the Attorney-General gave the go-ahead. Is it not high time that the law of the land applied equally to everybody, financiers included?

The Solicitor-General: I do not doubt that the Attorney-General expressed the view that fraud was at an unacceptable level, because any fraud is unacceptable. The law is the same for bankers, accountants, for rich and poor. The difficulty that the Attorney-General and the Director of Public Prosecutions have to face is that in some cases it is harder to acquire evidence in a form that is admissible in an English court of law. The hon. Gentleman will agree that it is desirable to have a prosecution case properly founded upon admissible evidence before proceedings are begun.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree tht the practice of peremptory challenges in City fraud cases is being used to constitute juries which have greater difficulty in understanding the facts than they should have?

The Solicitor-General: As my hon. Friend will recall, peremptory challenges were brought down from seven to three. This is not a wholly simple question. The use of the peremptory challenge has increased recently, and it is desirable to look into it. When we have the Crown Prosecution Service in being, that will be a proper means of looking at it.

Middlesex Crown Court Buildings

61. **Mr. Ashby** asked the Attorney-General when he expects the old Middlesex Crown Court buildings to be re-opened as a court; and if he will make a statement about the fine art contents of the building.

The Solicitor-General: The work now in progess is expected to be completed by the end of 1987 and the court will re-open thereafter. While the work is in hand, the fine art collection proviously housed in the Guildhall has been removed, partly to the Kenwood museum and partly to a Clerkenwell repository.

Mr. Ashby: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that there are two great Gainsboroughs there which ought to be on public view and perhaps should remain permanently at Kenwood?

The Solicitor-General: The Gainsboroughs are not in the court building at present. They are elsewhere, as I have indicated. It is not for me to say where they ought to stay: that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Kenwood is a very nice place.

Police Officers (Prosecution)

62. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Attorney-General when he next intends to meet the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss arrangements for the prosecution of police officers.

The Solicitor-General: The Attorney-General has frequent meetings with the Director of Public Prosecutions, at which he discusses individual cases of any nature as well as aspects of prosecuting policy.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the police officer who shot Mrs. Groce to be prosecuted, and if not, why not?

The Solicitor-General: As the hon. Gentleman will know, a report is being prepared into that tragic occurance by the assistant chief constable of West Yorkshire. The steps to be taken thereafter will naturally depend upon the content of that report, among other things.

Mr. Franks: Is my hon. and learned Friend satisfied that when files are referred by local police authorities to the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions those files are dealt with in the office at arm's length and not by individuals who are known to the alleged miscreants? Will my hon. and learned Friend make inquiries in a particular

matter to which I have drawn his attention and satisfy himself that that matter was dealt with at arm's length, and write to me about it?

The Solicitor-General: The answer to my hon. Friend's second question is yes.

With regard to my hon. Friend's first question, I am certain that the director wishes to ensure that any investigation carried out in his Department takes place without any handicap whatever. I shall draw his attention to my hon. Friend's question.

Mr. John Morris: May I wish the Attorney-General a speedy recovery.

Is the Solicitor-General satisfied with progress concerning the staffing of prosecutions generally? Is he aware of the deep and widespread concern about the salaries and career structure of the new prosecution service, which are not felt by the profession to be anywhere near the assurances that were given in the course of the proceedings on the Bill? Will he, before it is too late, go back to the Treasury to obtain the sort of salaries and career structure with which to start an independent prosecution service that is worthy of the name and able to attract first-class people?

The Solicitor-General: I am most grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for his good wishes to the Attorney-General, as I am sure the Attorney-General will be.

I agree that we all want an independent prosecution service, which will operate upon terms and conditions that will attract, retain and motivate people of the high quality that are needed. I note the expressions of anxiety to which the right hon. and learned Gentleman referred. I shall be seeing the trade union group again tomorrow.

Drug Smuggling

63. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Attorney-General what criteria the Director of Public Prosecutions uses in determining whether to initiate prosecutions relating to alleged drug smuggling offences; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions takes the decision whether to prosecute in relation to drug offences on the basis of the general criteria for prosecution issued by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General in February 1983, a copy of which is in the Library of the House of Commons. No special considerations apply, although the director regards any such offence as one of gravity.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Will the Solicitor-General tell us to what extent the criteria have been applied to the allegations in the *Daily Mail* of 24 August, which alleged that a high-ranking member of the Government was involved in cocaine smuggling? Can the Solicitor-General confirm or deny those allegations and put them to rest?

The Solicitor-General: The *Daily Mail* was invited by the police to make available any evidence that might substantiate the story to which the hon. Gentleman refers. It was unable to do so. Neither I nor the director are aware of any evidence whatever that would substantiate the story.

Mr. Dickens: Is the Solicitor-General aware that many hon. Members of this House, and certainly many members of the public, are very disturbed at the workings of the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions? Frequently, good and proper evidence is put forward, but charges are abandoned, and lesser charges are brought. That disturbs the public, it disturbs people such as myself, and it certainly disturbs observers at the trials. Will the Solicitor-General, when he next talks to the DPP, ask him either to get his house in order or to resign?

The Solicitor-General: I shall talk to the Director of Public Prosecutions at a quarter to four this afternoon, but I shall not put to him the suggestion that my hon. Friend has just made. My hon. Friend's question was rather long on generalities but singularly short on particulars. If he has any particular case in mind, I shall look at it very carefully.

Mr. Ryman: May I ask the Solicitor-General a sensible supplementary question? In relation to drug offences, what is the procedure for deciding whether the Director of Public Prosecutions or the solicitor for Customs and Excise takes the decision whether to prosecute?

The Solicitor-General: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the director has power to call in any case that appears to be of considerable difficulty or gravity, just as any prosecuting authority has the power to refer such a case to the director. That will apply in the category of cases to which the hon. Gentleman refers. There may be cases in which drugs are involved, where statutory requirements oblige the director to take the decision himself, but the general position is as I have described it.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Africa (Emergency Aid)

69. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his latest estimate of likely United Kingdom official emergency aid to countries in Africa in the current financial year.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): The Government expect to spend about £80 million on emergency aid for Africa in the current financial year through bilateral and European Community channels.

Mr. Chapman: In view of the scale and speed of the Government's response to the emergencies in many African countries, which unfortunately has not been emulated by many other countries, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government's response has in no way jeopardised the long-term and continuing development aid programmes from the Government to other countries?

Mr. Raison: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. I confirm that we have not had to cut country allocations to achieve the substantial amounts of emergency aid that we have achieved.

Mr. Beith: Has not the effect of the diversion of funds into the emergency programme been to the detriment of specific long-term aid projects within individual countries' programmes, particularly help to agriculture, without which there will be many more claims for emergency aid in future?

Mr. Raison: As I have just told my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman), we have not had to cut country allocations to achieve that emergency relief.

Mr. Soames: Will my right hon. Friend see what more he can do to use the resources of the Royal Air Force in distributing aid?

Mr. Raison: I am grateful for what the RAF has done in Ethiopia. If similar occasions arise, I have no doubt that the RAF will respond with its customary generosity.

70. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's contribution to Third world famine via chapter 9 of the European Community budget and the Lomé convention.

Mr. Raison: The European Community has made very substantial contributions towards famine relief in Africa in food aid and other emergency measures over last year and this. The British share over the past financial year and this one is likely to be around £77 million.

Mr. Taylor: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the United Kingdom, as a significant contributor to the Community budget, through the European instruments, gives infinitely more in famine relief to the Third world than many of its critics would acknowledge?

Mr. Raison: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The European Community is a large giver of food aid. We play a full share in what it gives.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that at the recent conference of the Lomé convention in the north of Scotland, which, if I am not mistaken, he addressed, great emphasis was placed on development in addition to immediate food aid? Does he accept the urgency of a long-term development policy, which means that people are not eating their own seed corn?

Mr. Raison: The conference at Inverness was judged by everybody who attended it to be a great success. We are grateful to the people of Scotland, especially Inverness, for their welcome. The hon. Gentleman is right. There appears to be nobody on the Opposition Front Bench to make the point today; there is no Opposition spokesman here. However, the hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the need for long-term development aid.

Contingency Fund (Aid Budget)

71. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the amount outstanding in the Contingency Fund for the aid budget at the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: As is normal at this stage in the financial year, a relatively small amount remains unallocated.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Given the immense demands that have rightly been made on the Contingency Fund this year, by how much does the Minister expect to be able to top up the fund before the end of the year?

Mr. Raison: The Contingency Fund and our other resources will be sufficient to deal with all the needs that arise in this financial year.

Mr. Latham: Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that he has done everything possible to ensure that tomorrow's statement from the Chancellor brings satisfactory news on the Contingency Fund and the main fund?

Mr. Raison: I advise my hon. Friend to await tomorrow afternoon's autumn statement from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

Ethiopia

72. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy concerning aid and relief in Ethiopia in the light of the enforced mass resettlement of distressed people.

Mr. Raison: We are continuing to provide relief aid to Ethiopia for humanitarian reasons, but we do not support or assist the Ethiopian Government's policy on resettlement.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Is it not intolerable that, when so many have been so generous and the Government have been so helpful, the Ethiopian dictatorship should callously worsen the suffering of the people of Ethiopia? What action is proposed?

Mr. Raison: The question of aid to Ethiopia is extremely difficult. We have concentrated on meeting the humanitarian needs in Ethiopia, which are great. However, there is no doubt that the political context in Ethiopia makes the provision of long-term development aid extremely difficult.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the Minister realise that it is difficult for many people inside and outside the House to reconcile his remarks about development or food aid with the Government's recent decision to press the European Community — unfortunately with success — to cut the food aid budget? Much though we may wish to help development projects, we also want to see food aid sensibly used.

Mr. Raison: The key matter is the sensible use of food aid. We believe that there is enough food aid available in the Community's aid programme to provide conventional food aid and the emergency reserves that are needed for famine relief.

Africa (Agriculture)

73. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the all-party group on overseas aid concerning United Kingdom assistance to agriculture in Africa.

75. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on aid to Africa in the light of the report of the all-party group on overseas development on that subject, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Raison: The group has sent me a copy of its report, which I am examining. Between 1979 and 1983, the proportion of all British bilateral aid to sub-Saharan Africa used for agriculture and related activities increased from 27 to 33 per cent. We are looking at ways to give more support to agriculture in Africa, with an emphasis on manpower assistance, training and research, and on the necessary policy reforms in African countries.

Mr. Baldry: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the only way that we shall avert famine in Africa is to help African farmers better to feed the people of that continent? Does not the all-party report on assisting agriculture in Africa demonstrate that there is a need to allocate further resources to agriculture there, and would not one way of doing this be to transfer part of the aid and trade budget, which supports British exporters, to the budget of the Department of Trade and Industry?

Mr. Raison: No, Sir, because the aid and trade budget is based, among other things, on developmental criteria. Therefore, it should be part of the aid programme. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is important to develop agriculture in Africa. We are always open to proposals from African countries to assist their agricultural activities.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Minister agree that the aid and trade provision, which gives capital-intensive money to developments such as power stations in Khartoum, is light years away from the real need, which the report rightly highlights as being the need to give basic indigenous agriculture a chance to prosper?

Mr. Raison: No, Sir. I accept that agricultural aid is of the greatest importance, but it is also important to help the economies of developing countries in other ways and not confine our aid solely to agriculture. The aid and trade provision is valuable in doing that.

Mr. Lester: In thanking my right hon. Friend for the help that he gave to the all-party group in producing its report, may I ask him whether he accepts that now is the key time to work with African Governments to improve their agricultural position, since many of them have changed their policy initiatives? Can he reassure us that this has been taken into consideration in the ODA budget, which will be revealed in tomorrow's statement by the Chancellor?

Mr. Raison: All those factors are taken into consideration when forming the public expenditure projections. I agree with my hon. Friend that this is a good time to discuss agricultural policy. I invariably make a point of discussing matters such as pricing policy, which is extremely important, when I meet my opposite numbers in the developing countries.

Mr. Spearing: If the Minister is so concerned about agricultural policy, especially in Africa, why did the Queen's Speech refer only to the relief of famine and not to its prevention? Will the Minister now affirm that the Government intend to direct their policies towards the prevention of famine as well as to its relief?

Mr. Raison: I am happy to make that affirmation. I am only sorry that the Opposition Front Bench has not been represented in our discussions today.

Mr. Stephen Ross: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In 35 minutes we reached only nine transport questions out of 59. If you have any influence over this, may I beg you to see whether we cannot get on a little faster in future?

Mr. Speaker: I can, of course, have an influence by calling fewer Back Benchers. Frequently, the trouble with Question Time is that long supplementary questions lead to long answers.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) asked a question about an accident that occurred in my constituency, on which I am awaiting a statement and on which I have strong views——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Lady saying that she was not called?

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: I am indeed.

Mr. Speaker: I am very sorry, but I cannot help the hon. Lady. With the best will in the world, I cannot call every hon. Member who wishes to speak on every subject.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: It is just not possible. It is also not a point of order.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Another hon. Member was called, yet I am the hon. Member concerned. I believe that I had a right to be called.

Mr. Speaker: I am very sorry. I will try to do better for the hon. Lady in the future.

Suspension of a Member

3.31 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise a matter of which I have given you notice. You will know that in Friday's debate on the Loyal Address the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) made an extremely lengthy speech. He prefaced that speech by levelling the gravest possible charge against my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He said:

"The Chancellor of the Exchequer is perverting the course of justice." — [*Official Report*, 8 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 256.]

On the face of it, that is a very grave accusation. It is difficult to think of any graver accusation that could be made against a Privy Councillor and a member of the Government.

The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch did not refer to the Chancellor again. In the course of his extremely long speech he made absolutely no attempt to justify that gravest of allegations against a right hon. Member. Is it not a gross abuse of this House for an hon. Member to come to this place and not even seek to substantiate such a grave allegation? Is it not right, therefore, that the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch, who is in his place, should have this opportunity to make a statement, to apologise and to withdraw what he said?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. A point of order has been put to me and I think that I should deal with it at once.

I was not in the Chair when the statement in question was made, but I have read the speech of the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), and in particular the allegation to which the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) has referred.

This was a serious reflection on the conduct of the Chancellor, and, as the House knows, it is our rule that one Member should not cast such a reflection on another unless the debate is based on a substantive motion dealing directly with the conduct complained of. In making this allegation in the debate on the Loyal Address, the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch breached that rule of order.

I am sure that the House would not wish a personal allegation of that kind, touching the honour of an hon. Member, to remain on the record. I therefore ask the hon. Member concerned to withdraw the comment.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I appreciate the concern of the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) about the difficulties that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is in—*[Interruption.]*—and I appreciate your concern over this matter, Mr. Speaker. You will know that there has been an exchange of letters today between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and myself.

When I was sent to this House, my constituents expected me to call Ministers to account, and to do so without fear or favour. What has happened in this case is that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made a grave, constitutional error and I believe that the right course would be for the Prime Minister this afternoon to call for his resignation. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Member saying, in effect, that he is repeating the allegation that he made on Friday?

Mr. Sedgemore: I should like to take the easy way out —the coward's way—and withdraw, but, with great regret, I cannot do that. The public outside expect the truth and, with even greater regret, I repeat the allegation.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Member will not withdraw that allegation, I shall be forced to name him. I give him one further chance: will the hon. Member withdraw that allegation?

Mr. Sedgemore: I cannot withdraw that allegation, because it is true.

Mr. Speaker: In that case, I name Mr. Brian Sedgemore.

Motion made, and Question put, That Mr. Brian Sedgemore be suspended from the service of the House. —*[Mr. Biffen.]*

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Skinner: We have been gagged from speaking on the matter.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East) *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the comments that you made a few moments ago about the conduct of hon. Members in the House, would not it be in order to require the Minister of State, Home Office to come and make an apology to the House in the light of what he said the other day about hon. Members abusing their position in dealing with immigration problems?

Mr. Speaker: The two cases are in no way connected.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood) *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I cannot accept that there is no connection between the two cases. You said in your ruling that it was against the rules of the House for one hon. Member to call into question the integrity of another. That is exactly what the Minister of State, Home Office did. If you are to be consistent, you must surely deal with his breach in the same way as you are dealing with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore).

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady will know that I received a letter about the allegations made by the Minister of State, Home Office, questioning whether they were a breach of privilege. I am naming the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) because he refused to obey my request to withdraw his statement.

The House having divided: Ayes 204, Noes 46.

Division No. 1] **[3.36 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon

Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruce, Malcolm
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dormand, Jack
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Favell, Anthony
Fletcher, Alexander
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Foster, Derek
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Freud, Clement
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk N)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Penhaligon, David
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Radice, Giles
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Silvester, Fred
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Waldegrave, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Tim Sainsbury.

NOES

Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Benn, Tony
Bidwell, Sydney
Boyes, Roland
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Dixon, Donald
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Flannery, Martin
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maynard, Miss Joan
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
O'Brien, William
Park, George
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Wareing, Robert
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Tony Banks.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: I direct the hon. Member for Hackney South and Shoreditch to withdraw from the House.

The hon. Member withdrew accordingly.

Statutory Instruments, &c

Mr. Speaker: By leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the seven motions relating to draft statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Ivory Coast) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Canada) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Finland) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Soviet Union) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Norway) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Forestry (Modification of Felling Restrictions) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Summer Time Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Ten Minutes Rule

3.50 pm

Mr. Speaker: Before we proceed to the next business, I wish to make a short statement.

I remind hon. Members that the resolution limiting speeches to 10 minutes between 6 pm and 8 pm and 7 pm and 9 pm lapsed at the end of the last Session. I therefore have no authority to impose a limit until a new resolution has been passed. However, many hon. Members have signified their wish to take part in the debate that is to follow. I appeal to them—to all who are called—to limit themselves to 10 minutes throughout the day so that as many as possible can take part. I also appeal to the Front Benches to observe due restraint.

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[FOURTH DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [6 November]

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament—*[Sir Reginald Eyre]*.

Question again proposed.

Social Security and Education

3.51 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): The immediate context of the debate on social security is that in two weeks' time we will be uprating social security benefits. That will add another £2 billion to spending on social security. It will bring total spending on social security to well over £40 billion a year—almost a third of all public expenditure.

Uprating pensions and other linked long-term benefits by 7 per cent. will raise the single person's pension by £2·50 a week and the married couple's pension by £4 a week. That will mean that between November 1978 and November 1985 pensions will have gone up by over 96 per cent.—some 10 percentage points ahead of the rise in prices. Thus we have more than fulfilled our pledge to protect the value of the retirement pension, and that is a pledge that we stand by as firmly today.

This month's uprating means that since 1979 this Government have increased the social security budget by 30 per cent. in real terms. Some of that increase has been due to unemployment. I make no apology for the fact that we have given that substantial support to those in need of it, but it is important to recognise that the major part of that real increase in spending is due to real increases in the value of benefits, and in particular to the increased number of pensioners. Since 1979 the total number of pensioners has increased by over 750,000. The result is that we are now paying higher value pensions to more pensioners than ever before in history.

This Government have done even more. We have more than doubled the mobility allowance and taken it out of tax. We have abolished the invalidity trap and taken war widows' pensions out of tax. We have cut national insurance contributions for the lower paid. Therefore, let us be clear. The debate is about the policy of a Government, who, by any measure, have already committed vast resources to social security and, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statement tomorrow will show, are planning to maintain that commitment.

There is a further fundamental point. Since 1979 we have also cut inflation to a fraction of the 27 per cent. peak that it reached in the mid-1970s. It is now below 6 per

nt., and falling. The reduction of inflation is of crucial nportance to all those on low incomes and to pensioners particular.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) nds to have a short memory on this matter, but when we ok back to 1976, when inflation was running at 20 per nt., and more for a whole year on end, we see that it was e hon. Gentleman who, according to *The Times*, was outed down at a pensions rally. The report stated:

"Old age pensioners shouted down Mr. Meacher, Undercretary of State at the DHSS yesterday as he tried to explain e Government's record on pensions".

fact, those pensioners had learnt from bitter experience fact that we should all face—that one cannot separate onomic policy from social policy. High spending and e high inflation that follows will always undermine a overnment's social objectives, however worthy they ay be. Inflation is a social evil as well as an economic e. It attacks the poor hardest and destroys the security the pensioners first. It must therefore be a first social iority to drive inflation down and to keep it down. We ast never return to the days of hyper inflation of the mid-70s.

There is another aspect of the debate that goes beyond mparisons of past performance, and that is the case for form for the future. The fact is that the present system nnot be sustained. Social security has become a creaking ructure in danger of collapse, and parts of the system are nply indefensible.

We cannot defend a system whose rules are frequently ntradictory and which can leave so many people trapped a position where it is not worth saving, not worth thering to earn more and where a man can actually lose oney when he takes a job. We cannot defend a system at is so complex that it creates major difficulties, both those who operate the system and for those whom it supposed to help.

We cannot defend a system that fails to deliver adequate pport to many of those who are in the greatest need. For ample, the evidence accumulated during the course of social security review pointed to a clear need to provide lp to working families on low incomes, which the esent system fails to meet. We cannot defend a system at makes promises for the future that are clearly beyond capacity of this generation to command and of the next fulfil.

Presented with those challenges, it is simply no good proclaim that every existing benefit must be preserved, to come out with a stream of worthless promises to raise blic spending more and more. The question is not ether social security should be reformed but how it uld be reformed. That is a challenge from which no rty can stand aside.

That is why the Government have carried out their iew of social security with the aim—for the first e since the 1940s—of looking at social security erall rather than in a piecemeal way. In developing our proach, we believe that the system should meet three in objectives.

First, social security must be capable of meeting uine need. That means rather more than constructing adequate income support scheme to replace plementary benefit. It means recognising that needs ange. In particular, it means today recognising that one the groups which are by any definition in most need are w-income families with children—not just those where the head of the family is unemployed, but where the head of the family is in work. It is for that reason that we have set out proposals for a family premium with income support.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Although I very much appreciate my right hon. Friend's sterling work and his sympathetic attitude towards the least well off in our community, I must ask whether he accepts the grave anxiety among women that child benefit may not continue to be paid direct to them? Many women, not only those in the lowest income group, have child benefit as their only source of independent income. If that is to be frozen, they will be very annoyed.

Mr. Fowler: Indeed, I thought that my hon. Friend would go on to make a further point about how child benefit is paid. I cannot pre-empt the uprating statement that I shall make on child benefit, but clearly the whole intent of the Green Paper and the policy that we have set out is to continue child benefit as a basic support that is paid to women, but also to do something more.

I think my hon. Friend accepts that it is no good relying only on child benefit. The problem that has been highlighted in our inquiry into social security is that a whole range of low-income families with children need additional support. Family income supplement is not reaching those children. That is why I believe that although FIS rightly sought to tackle the issue and at the time was undoubtedly a major step forward, it suffers now from a number of defects, not least that it has not adequately tackled either the unemployment or the poverty trap. Our view is that it cannot be justified to have a system where a man can be worse off in work than out of work, or where his take home pay may actually fall even though his nominal pay rises. Our proposals for family credit—using net income—seek to tackle that problem and to bring increased help to some of our poorest families.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): We welcome the Secretary of State's statement that the working poor will be given substantial help. I should like to question the right hon. Gentleman about what he means by substantial and extra help. May we have a guarantee that when one takes account of the loss of family income supplement, the cuts in housing benefit and the freezing of child benefit, the new family credit will amount to more than the loss of income on those three fronts?

Mr. Fowler: The purpose is to bring extra help to low-income families in work. We shall set out the objectives and the tables in the White Paper. By introducing family credit we mean extra support, not less support, in that area.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Is it not also important to bear in mind the Government's avowed intention to reduce the income tax burden on the poor? Are not many people in receipt of family income supplement paying tax?

Mr. Fowler: The whole House will share the aspiration to raise tax thresholds. We all agree that many people on low incomes who are paying tax now should be taken out of tax. That is the Government's aim. I am sure that there is widespread support throughout the country for that.

Mr. Frank Field: Poor families will not be reassured by the statement that more money will be available globally. People want a commitment that individually they will be better off. Will the right hon. Gentleman give that clear commitment?

Mr. Fowler: I have tried to answer that precise point. These issues will be set out in the White Paper. Like everyone else, the hon. Gentleman, even with his expertise, will have to wait until the White Paper is published.

Our second objective is that the social security system must be simpler to understand and easier to administer. I do not see how anyone can be happy with a supplementary benefit organisation which requires almost 40,000 staff to administer, but which, through absolutely no fault of the staff, is not always able to provide the service which is needed.

I do not see how anyone can be happy with a system under which all the main income-related benefits — supplementary benefit, housing benefit and family income supplement — use different measures of income and capital. I do not see how anyone can be happy with a system where local offices simply lack the modern aids which are necessary to provide a modern service.

It is for all these reasons that we are proposing the reform of supplementary benefit, the introduction of a common basis for our systems of income support, housing benefit and family support, and that we are now embarking on the biggest computerisation programme in Europe so that offices will not depend on manual records in the same time-wasting and inefficient way as they do now.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): DHSS staff are experiencing difficulty throughout the country. Will the Secretary of State comment on articles which appeared in the press last week about the confidential Ernst and Whinney report, which apparently advises that 10,000 extra civil servants will be needed to administer the complex new schemes which the right hon. Gentleman intends to introduce?

Mr. Fowler: We are examining the staff implications of the new proposals. A reduction in DHSS permanent staff is expected, and we are examining the temporary, transitional implications. I do not advise the hon. Gentleman to rely on reports about that matter. A newspaper report should not be relied upon for an accurate opinion.

Our third objective is that the social security system must be consistent with the Government's overall objectives for the economy. The scope for sustaining social security provision depends on the performance of the economy and the creation of wealth. Equally, it means that social security itself should not place barriers in the way of economic development—barriers such as high national insurance rates, which can discourage jobs, or restrictions on pensions which can prevent job mobility.

The Government's proposals for the reform of social security are set out with those objectives in mind. Clearly the final proposals will be set out in the Government's White Paper shortly.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): When?

Mr. Fowler: In the next weeks. At this stage, there are two major points to make. The first, is on the current problems we face, and the second is on future policy. The first point is this. Inevitably, there must be a limit to the resources that any Government can devote to social security. The lesson of that is that resources cannot be wasted—that can only mean areas of undoubted need getting less. However difficult the problems may be, we must ensure that resources are properly directed at those who need them.

That is why we are seeking the control of board and lodging spending. Spending in this area has risen from around £200 million a year at the end of 1982 to £600 million a year by the end of 1984. For ordinary board and lodging it rose from £166 million to £380 million in those two years. There was evidence of abuse — both by landlords and claimants—and young people were being drawn into accommodation which they could not afford to pay for if they were in work. Our aim has been to ensure that proper help goes to those with a genuine need to be in board and lodging, while excluding those who do not.

One part of the regulations was called into question by a High Court judgment at the end of July, and as a result we have appealed to the Court of Appeal. The question of what to do in the interim obviously arises. There is a prospect of prolonged uncertainty, because, whatever the outcome in the Court of Appeal, it will be open to either side to consider an appeal to the House of Lords. So if we do nothing there is the risk of confusion—while at the same time calling into question the increase in benefit payable later this month to people in residential and nursing homes. That is an effect that no one wants.

So, for all the reasons that I set out in my statement at the end of last month, I am laying fresh regulations today which the House will have the opportunity of debating very shortly. They meet the Government's immediate objectives, while at the same time responding to the Joint Committee's concerns.

The revised regulations establish the framework of board and lodging areas, time limits and financial limits, without providing for any of the powers questioned in the High Court. They provide for the time limits to be reintroduced for new claimants as soon as regulations are made, but they will not be applied to existing boarders on benefit until 28 July 1986, coinciding with next year's general uprating of benefits. The regulations also give statutory backing to the increase in the limits for residential care and nursing homes due to come into effect on 25 November.

A number of other provisions enable us to deal with difficult cases. I am taking powers to exempt from the time limits claimants who would otherwise suffer exceptional hardship. I am also taking discretionary powers to help in individual cases of genuine hardship. This will mainly help people in residential and nursing homes who before last April were meeting their own charges, but are unable to carry on doing so and are now entitled to supplementary benefit.

The House will have a very early opportunity of debating these regulations, but there is a further important point that I should make on action which is clearly now necessary to combat the emerging evidence of fraud in this area. The House will recall that a special investigation earlier this year in Euston showed that about half of those claiming to be residents in particular hotels were no longer there—about 600 cases out of 1,200. Following that, I asked for other checks to be carried out in all regions. They are not fully completed. When they are, I shall make the full results available to the House during, I hope, December.

Nevertheless, it is clear already that there is similar evidence of abuse in other parts of the country. The evidence that we have from other parts of London, parts

of Manchester and Edinburgh, and from towns like Southend, show that an appreciable proportion of claimants were found not to be resident at the hotel named on their claim form. One address which had been given for 24 claimants proved on investigation to have not a single claimant in residence.

Such examples of abuse involve not only claimants but the proprietors of accommodation. This cannot be totally prevented by the passing of regulations alone, although the size of the abuse can be reduced. Clearly, what is needed is a further effort to reduce fraud and abuse, and I intend, therefore, to increase the scale of our effort in this area. I hope that, whatever else we may disagree on, there will be agreement that fraud, whether committed by claimants or landlords, or both in co-operation, should be combated as effectively as possible. I give notice now that this will be our intention in the coming months.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Before the right hon. Gentleman makes these serious allegations, will he confirm that the overwhelming majority of the 600 in the Euston area had committed no fraud whatsoever, but had simply moved to a different bed-and-breakfast establishment and were not claiming any more funds than they had received previously? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the reasons for this not being known are DHSS bureaucracy and the fact that claimants would lose three weeks' benefit if they made it clear that they had moved? If there has been fraud in as many cases as that, why is it that only 10 have been prosecuted?

Mr. Fowler: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is wrong on his first point. There is no evidence of the kind that he has suggested to show that people have simply moved to another address. The fact is that 1,170 claims were examined, covering 30 hotels, and that in 55 per cent. of the cases the claimants were found not to be resident at the hotel stated on their claim form, in spite of the fact that they had the two-weekly returns to the office to confirm where they were staying.

In addition to the evidence from Euston, we now have evidence from Earls Court, from Edinburgh, from Notting Hill and from Southend. If the hon. Gentleman says that it is simply the same problem and that there is really nothing to worry about, I wonder how he explains a situation where, at one address purporting to accommodate 24 claimants, not one was found to be there.

Mr. Meacher: Why not prosecute?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman will have heard what I said about increasing the efforts in this area. One of the results of that will unquestionably be that we will have to put more emphasis on prosecution than we did in the past. On that matter, the hon. Gentleman is pushing at an open door.

I and my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security have looked at this evidence carefully, although it is not yet complete. When it is, we will certainly put it to the House. On all the evidence that we have, however, I must advise the House that there is a serious problem, and it is right that the Government should take action against it. I cannot defend a situation in which the social security system is being defrauded, because that will only mean losses for those who need help.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): Will my right hon. Friend tell the House how many prosecutions have ensued from this investigation, and thus, I hope, deny what has been said from the Opposition Benches?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is right. A small number of prosecutions have taken place. That is one of the reasons why I am announcing to the House that more staff will be employed in this area, with the intention of bringing more cases forward for prosecution.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): May I follow up the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell)? If there is indeed a hotel which is said to have 24 claimants, and if not one of those claimants is living at that hotel, what is preventing their immediate prosecution? Secondly, are we certain that the 24 claimants are not still falsely receiving taxpayers' money?

Mr. Fowler: On the latter point, we are not. On the first point, the whole issue of prosecution in that case is under consideration. It is literally at this moment being considered by the authorities. In those circumstances, I cannot go further than to indicate to the House that what the Government and the DHSS have discovered is a problem that should be tackled firmly, not only in terms of investigation, but with follow-up action. I am sure that my hon. Friends, with their experience, will believe that to be right.

Mr. Frank Field *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: I should like to go on. I shall keep the House informed about the position.

Mr. Field *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: No, I have given way twice to the hon. Member in this debate.

The second thing that I would like to raise——

Mr. Cormack *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: I have given way several times. I should like to continue, but nevertheless I give way.

Mr. Cormack: I do not know whether my right hon. Friend realises how strong is the feeling on this side of the House and, I am sure, on the Opposition Benches too. My right hon. Friend has given no adequate explanation of why there have not been more prosecutions. How much money does he think is involved in this?

Mr. Fowler: My information is that there have been 30 prosecutions so far. What I am announcing to the House is that we will commit more resources and more staff to the pursuit, not only of investigation, but of prosecution in such cases. That is the whole purpose of the follow-up action that we are taking as a result of this investigation.

The Government are determined to take action to combat this fraud in the social security system. That is what we have been battling to do. That is why I have put the proposals and the position frankly to the House.

Mr. Field *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: No, I shall not give way.

The second major area is pensions. Whatever disagreements there may be about whether SERPS should be replaced or restricted, I believe that there is now a widespread acceptance that it cannot be left unchanged. What is clear is that between now and 2035 the number

[Mr. Fowler]

of pensioners will grow by something like 4 million—while the number of contributors will increase only slightly. In other words, in the pay-as-you-go scheme which is SERPS the ratio of contributors to pensioners will worsen. There will be proportionately fewer contributors to pay the bill that we are handing down to future generations.

We believe that those issues must be faced now. A nation should have the courage to look ahead. If the best estimates available to us lead us to question whether we will be able to afford the promises that we are making, we have a duty to re-examine the position. It would be an abdication of responsibility to hand down obligations to our children which we believe they cannot fulfil.

It is not just a question of absolute costs—important as they may be. It is also a question of priorities. The number of pensioners will increase — that we know. That increased population of pensioners will need many other services, such as health and personal social services, which we cannot necessarily fully foresee at this stage. What we can, however, ensure is that we do not pre-empt the resources of the state and unduly limit the flexibility of future Governments to carry out the policies that they judge necessary.

The further point to make about pensions is that, although SERPS has dominated the headlines, that ignores the important changes that are to take place in occupational and personal pensions. At present nearly half of the work force is without cover by an occupational scheme of any kind. Around 11 million are in schemes, but more than 9 million are not. What is clear is that that position has remained more or less the same for the past 20 years. It covers not only the years of the so-called "pensions blight" up to the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 but the years since that legislation. In neither of those periods has any significant change in the position been achieved.

It is a central aim of the Government's policy that that position should be improved. We want to see more people with their own pension and a growth in the pension-owning democracy alongside the home-owning democracy that we are already creating. That is not just an aspiration of the Government. It is also the wish of the public, as shown by the Gallup opinion poll commissioned for the review. The public want the security and independence that occupational and personal pensions can provide, and our aim is to meet those aspirations. In any policy to achieve that, there are a number of essential elements.

First, we must seek to give the public new options. We aim to develop, not only personal pensions, but industry-wide schemes in industries where occupational coverage is low. We want a generally simpler regime for occupational schemes. For the man in a scheme who wants to do more for himself, but does not want to go as far as a personal pension, we will give a right to pay additional voluntary contributions. The Green Paper proposal to give everyone a right to pay AVCs has been universally welcomed.

Secondly, we will enable new providers to offer pensions. Our aim should be to give more choice and encourage more competition. Banks, unit trusts and building societies will be able to become pension providers. What they have in common is a particular expertise in serving the needs of individual customers. I want to see them helping more of their existing customers to plan for their retirement, and placing at the disposal of new customers their proven knowledge and skills.

Thirdly, we must ensure that people have access to new and better information. We have already acted to promote this by our new disclosure requirements, which come into effect next year. People have a right to know where they stand in relation to their pension rights. I want to bring about a situation where more people understand fully the value of those pension rights.

Those changes will come on top of the important improvements in the Social Security Act 1985, which protect early leavers, confer new rights to transfer values, and give people more information about their schemes. Those changes will go down as some of the most important improvements made to occupational schemes. Although I am bound to observe that in the months leading up to those changes there was less than enthusiasm from some of the established pension interests, now that the legislation is in place there is common ground that the Government were right to act in this way and that the lack of protection for early leavers was indefensible.

We will consider carefully the points put to us in the consultation on the Green Paper—on pensions and the other issues raised. I make no apology for that. It is right for the Government to consult the public on these issues. In addition, the time has now come for decisions and actions. Good government means facing not only the problems of today, but finding solutions to them. Good government means looking ahead and establishing the kind of system that we want for the future. That is what the country wants, and that is what the Social Security Bill will do.

4.24 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): This year was to be the year of the biggest review of the welfare state since Beveridge. It is the view of many that it is turning into the biggest fiasco of this Parliament. What was billed as the biggest review for half a century did not even get a mention in the Prime Minister's speech to the Tory party conference this year, and was granted precisely a single inexplicit line in the Queen's Speech. It is inexplicit because, as the Secretary of State made clear today, the Government, two years after the reviews were inaugurated and one year after they reported, still do not know what the Bill will contain. The White Paper is still only half-written, although it is months overdue. Four drafts have already had to be torn up.

On 26 October, and again today, the Secretary of State said

> "Our aim must be again to listen to what people are saying . . . We must work that much harder and make sure that at every step we carry the great bulk of common-sense opinion with us."

If the Secretary of State had meant that, he would have withdrawn the entire package.

There is no precedent in modern times for a Government proposing a programme of reform which unites such utterly disparate sections of opinion in such a consensus of hostility. Anyone who can manufacture a coalition ranging from the Confederation of British Industry to the Church of England, women's institutes to the Law Society, the welfare lobby to the pensions industry and the Trades Union Congress to large sections of the Conservative party is either a master tactician or a master bungler. Not many people would designate the

Secretary of State a master tactician. From the 7,000 responses to the Green Paper's proposals, no fewer than 98 per cent. were critical or hostile. It is only fair to say that the Secretary of State has his enthusiastic, admiring supporters. From an examination of those responses it is clear that they are confined to the Institute of Directors and the Monday Club.

The Labour party is in favour of reform and improvement of the welfare state, but the Government's Green Paper package is not primarily about reform. It is about cuts. SERPS is not being reformed but either abolished or emasculated. Housing benefit is not being reformed, except marginally, but cut by the huge sum of £500 million on top of the £200 million last year. Supplementary benefit is not being reformed, except peripherally, but cut by £180 million. Child benefit is not being reformed, even marginally or peripherally, but cut by £175 million this year, and, if it is frozen, even more next year.

The whole exercise was flawed from the start. One cannot have genuine reform if one begins with a nil cost estimate. One ends up by redistributing poverty among different groups of the poor. One cannot reach independent objective conclusions if one stacks the review committee with Tory placemen and placewomen. One cannot effect coherent reform if one fails to look at social security and taxation as a whole. One cannot expect people to take the charade of the review exercise seriously if one concludes that SERPS should be abolished when the proposal to abolish it was not even considered by the pensions council team.

One cannot expect much credibility to attach to the idea of a review because wide-ranging changes in widows' benefits are proposed when there was no review of widows' benefits. On the other hand, there is a deafening silence on benefits for the 16 to 19-year-old age group, when a whole review was devoted to benefits for children and young people. To cap it all, the Government cannot do all those things and then regale themselves with the spirit of Beveridge. The Fowler reviews have done about as much for social security as the captain of the Titanic did for navigation.

I listened carefully to the Secretary of State and I found he failed to answer four fundamental questions about the Government's intentions. By far the most important—he skated over it again today—is the future of SERPS. There is virtually unanimous agreement everywhere, even on the Government Back Benches, that, in the words of the Government's own social security advisory committee report 1985, paragraph 7(3):

"Providing pensions at a level comparable to SERPS will cost the economy as much as SERPS even if that cost is shifted from the public to the private sector. A substantial reduction in total future costs can be obtained only by reducing benefits for future pensioners."

Certainly everyone bar the Secretary of State recognises that a compulsory 4 per cent. contribution to private schemes would be nowhere near enough to compensate for SERPS. Indeed, for the low paid with intermittent work records it would barely be sufficient to cover even administrative costs and, if the Secretary of State carries out his original plan, the result will be a huge increase in poverty in old age, which SERPS is now on the brink of eradicating.

It is ironic that what the Government's vindictiveness over the abolition of the GLC did for the reputation of Ken Livingstone the Secretary of State has now done for the reputation of SERPS. By seeking to destroy it he has proved how good it is. It is revealed as far more efficient than the private sector, and its administrative costs of 1·5 per cent. of contributions compare with 18 per cent. for private schemes.

It offers a fully transferable pension with assured benefits at low cost for a large section of the population which the private sector would find it impossible to pension properly. I refer, of course, to the low paid, to those with fluctuating or intermittent earnings and to frequent job changers. There is one other point that must be made clear. Should the near deafening chorus of hostility to the abolition of SERPS force the Government to bow to the inevitable, as I suspect it will, relief at the preservation of SERPS would be premature, indeed wrong, if the Government then resorted to major modifications of the scheme. It cannot be emphasised too often or too vehemently that there is no justification whatever for any such emasculation of the scheme.

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the proposals contained in the Green Paper for the reform of SERPS show that there will be no saving to the Treasury in the first 10 years; that we are talking about long-term reforms; and that that indicates that the Government are concerned about getting the scheme right in the long run and are not concerned to save money in the short run?

Mr. Meacher: I never suggested that in this case the Government were saving money in the short run. There is no justification for changes in the long run either, because no alternative to SERPS could provide pensions for the people I have mentioned at anything like the low costs of SERPS.

The costs of the scheme were fully recognised at the outset 10 years ago, and even the Tory Reform Group acknowledged that in its response to the Green Paper proposals. The Tory Reform Group says:

"The Green Paper's references to emerging costs seem to imply that the full cost of SERPS was not known in 1975. However, Edward Johnstone, the Government actuary and a member of the pension review team, has made it clear that this is not so."

It is unworthy of the Secretary of State to cast doubt on the judgment and capabilities of a senior and distinguished civil servant, purely for his own political reasons. The same Tory Reform Group paper condemns the Green Paper for—and I quote the group's words again—

"its rather dubious statistical arguments".

That is to say, costs are shown in current prices when what really matters, as we all know, is their trend GDP and the dependency ratio.

The only way the Government have managed to convey the impression that SERPS is not affordable—and the Secretary of State did this again today—is by cheating in the presentation of economic forecasts. The Secretary of State for Social Services wants to show that SERPS is not viable and projects an economic growth rate for the next 50 years of only 1·5 per cent. a year. The Chancellor of the Exchequer wants us to believe—and no doubt particularly tomorrow—that the British economy has achieved a sustained revival and projects 3 per cent. a year. Both cannot be right, and both may indeed be wrong. The most reliable estimate is probably the one given by the CBI, and I quote from its response to the Green Paper:

[Mr. Meacher]

"Even if the economy grew more slowly in the coming decades than the 2·25 per cent. per year performance averaged in the last three to four decades, the proportion of national income taken by state pensions would not rise."

In a footnote the CBI says:

"Indeed, national insurance contribution rates would fall significantly if the basic state pensions were indexed to price inflation as on current rules rather than increases in earnings."

That tells a totally different story from the one put out by the Secretary of State. It firmly gives the lie to the statement made by the Secretary of State in a speech about a week ago on 5 November when he said — and he repeated the same words today:

"There is widespread recognition that the emerging costs of SERPS should be reduced."

The truth is exactly the reverse. I am glad to see that the Secretary of State is nodding. There is a growing recognition that the costs of SERPS, which have always been fully known, need not be reduced. No argument can justify what the Secretary of State said today.

Mr. Kennedy: I concur completely with the hon. Gentleman in his criticism of the way in which the Secretary of State has handled this issue. Perhaps I could ask the hon. Gentleman a question about his own position. Suppose, as appears to be the case, that the Secretary of State moves away from outright abolition without trying to maintain political consensus, and towards some form of restructuring which may carry the pensions industry with it. If the hon. Gentleman were in a position to do something about that in future, would he return directly to what would by then be the former system of SERPS, even though the industry by then would have shifted its position from the hostility which it rightly shows towards the Government at the moment?

Mr. Meacher: I welcome that question and I want to make it clear that in two years' time when we are in a position to do something about this we shall reintroduce SERPS, either in the same form or in some improved form. There is the issue of existing pensioners. I know that Tory Back Benchers are not particularly concerned about the 10 million pensioners who at present do not have the advantage of the accrual under SERPS. We are concerned about that. The hon. Gentleman was good enough to put the question. Is his position the one outlined recently by Lord Banks on behalf of the Liberals, which is that the alliance apparently stands for the abolition of SERPS?

Mr. Frank Field: May I plead with my hon. Friend to keep a more open mind on what the next Government might do? Is there not something morally wrong in asking future generations to pay a level of contribution towards our pensions that we are not prepared currently to pay for existing pensioners? Given that position, is not there a trade-off, which the Government refuse to make, to reform SERPs in such a way that we pay higher pensions to existing pensioners, rather than planning for the year 2000 onwards?

Mr. Meacher: I do not believe that my hon. Friend is right in suggesting that the two concepts are mutually exclusive. I was making the point, in answer to the previous intervention, that the position of existing pensioners—who have not had the advantage, because they retired too early, of the annual accruals under SERPS —should be safeguarded. That depends, of course, on the state of the economy—in particular, the reduction of unemployment and greater economic growth. Pensioners should have an increasing stake in that growth. That was, indeed, the position of the Tory Government in 1980, as stated by the then Secretary of State. The reality has turned out to be very different. But I do not believe that that argument, which I support, is a reason for underplaying in any way the enormous benefits provided by SERPS, and I still stand, on behalf of my party, behind SERPS as the best scheme that our pensioners have ever had.

It is high time that the Government recognised three facts about pensions. First, pensions are about providing a decent standard of living in old age for everyone; they are not about satisfying the fantasies of the Prime Minister about making everyone his own capitalist. Secondly, if the Germans and the French are capable of affording pensions of 62 or 70 per cent. of average earnings, we can do a great deal better than the miserable 29 per cent. which is all we are achieving at present. Thirdly, a broad measure of political agreement and stability is vital for pension planning. The handling of the Green Paper proposals on pensions provides an object lesson on how such things should not be done.

The second fundamental question that the Secretary of State has still not answered relates to what changes he is proposing to make in the social fund in view of the unparalleled barrage of hostility that the matter has run into. He did not mention it today. Perhaps he would like to intervene as I go along. It has widely and correctly been seen as reintroducing the hated relieving officer of the old Victorian poor law. The indignity of asking for discretionary payments and being labelled as a bad manager will discourage many in real need from claiming, especially the elderly, who will be deprived of heating grants as their protection against hypothermia.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that the funds available for essential heating, clothing and furniture needs will be cut by no less than 60 per cent., from £260 million this year to only £100 million a year, if the social fund is introduced? In other words, the whole exercise is not about reform; it is about huge cuts.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the comment made by the Social Security Advisory Committee in paragraph 3.42 of its report? It says:

"We are in sympathy with the general thrust of these suggestions. We think they form a logical development of the present system and will simplify its operations".

Mr. Meacher: I am indeed aware of that, and I hope that the hon. Lady is aware that the report goes on to say:

"It cannot work if the income support rates and premiums are not set at an adequate level."

It then goes on to say:

"The social fund goes too far in making all payments discretionary. The proposal that some payments should be by the recoverable loan is interesting but we think it has a limited role unless basic benefit rates are increased. There should be discretion to make all payments as grants where the circumstances warrant it. The need for an external appeal mechanism will remain."

I hope that next time the hon. Lady will read the whole passage.

Will the Secretary of State now accept that there must be an independent appeal against the arbitrary decisions of officials if claimants are not to turn in increasing numbers to Members of Parliament and the High Court? Will he now acknowledge that the principle of recoverable loans

deducted from benefit will reduce the income of claimants below subsistence and plunge them into a downward spiral of ever-increasing debt? Will he now recognise that the introducion of means-tested and recoverable funeral payments is almost universally condemned because it will expose the recently bereaved to distressing and harrowing interrogations?

The social fund is a callous and damaging proposal. The Society of Civil and Public Servants and the Association of Directors of Social Services have made it clear that they will not co-operate in its introduction, and for that reason it is difficult to see how it could ever work. As the Secretary of State is now getting into the habit of withdrawing ill-considered proposals such as the board and lodging regulations, which have been withdrawn twice, and perhaps the proposals for SERPS, he should now drop the social fund, which is widely seen to be a half-baked shambles.

The third central issue that the Secretary of State has failed to clarify is the future of housing benefit, where his proposed cuts of £500 million are now widely seen as manifestly unfair. In particular, the proposed combined take-up for rent and rates is clearly unfair on owner-occupiers, especially pensioners who pay only rates and will therefore face substantial losses. The proposed 70 per cent. rate of withdrawal is far too steep and will greatly worsen the poverty trap. How can the Secretary of State possibly justify what leaked DHSS figures show — a fivefold increase in families on the breadline facing marginal tax rates of over 80 per cent.?

The proposal that all claimants, even those with incomes below the income support level, below the state poverty line, will be required to pay 20 per cent. of their rates will once again force millions of people below the poverty line.

The iniquitous proposal to withdraw mortgage interest tax relief for the first six months on the dole from families on low incomes, struggling to buy a house, can only lead to DHSS-created evictions and homelessness.

There are three straight questions that the Secretary of State needs to answer on housing benefit, which he has so far notably evaded. How can it be fair and right to deprive pensioners and widows of housing benefit because their husbands were thrifty enough in their lifetime to save to provide a small occupational pension? When will the Government learn the lesson of the 1982-83 fiasco, when the housing benefit was first introduced, which makes it abundantly clear that local authorities will need far more time than the April 1987 timetable allows to implement the considerable changes proposed in the Green Paper?

Above all, when will the Secretary of State face the truth — that the increase in expenditure on housing benefit, which he is so impatient to cut, has not been caused by any over-generosity in the scheme? It has been caused by increased rents and soaring unemployment, and by the transfer of supplementary benefit cases from the DHSS. If he nods, as he seems to be doing, why does he not make changes in the scheme? Why must he impose it on poor people who have no defence? If the Secretary of State cannot or will not answer those questions, he should not be surprised that the housing benefit cuts are seen as illogical, mean and unfair.

Mr. Favell: Is it not a fact that 4 million recipients of housing benefit are not even entitled to supplementary benefit, and that many of them are actually paying tax? Should not the state, whenever possible, encourage people to pay their own housing costs, look after their own children, provide for their own old age and pay for their own funeral?

Mr. Meacher: I presume that the hon. Gentleman means that tax reliefs, which are given without regard to need, should be ended so that there could be more money to provide for those in need who are not getting the assistance they need. If that is his argument, I agree with it.

The fourth area that is in such a mess in the Green Paper concerns family benefits. The Government are proposing either to freeze child benefit or yet again uprate it by much less than the rate of inflation. The Labour party is totally opposed to that. We believe that child benefit should be significantly increased. We are also strongly opposed to the way in which it is envisaged that the new family credit will operate, which is hopelessly flawed. It is likely that the take-up rate will be even lower than the family income supplement take-up rate—which was only 50 per cent. because of the need to produce 13 weekly payslips instead of five — because the award period is being reduced from 12 months to six, and because the employer will be involved. We also object to the Government's proposals because deducting family credit from tax and national insurance contributions will encourage employers to pay lower wages, although no doubt that is precisely the Government's intention.

We also object to the proposal because the abolition of the local authorities' discretionary power to provide free meals and the ending of free welfare food to low income families who are not on income support will mean average losses of over £2 a week for about one third of a million families, where poverty and poor nutrition are already rife. Most of all, we object to it because payment through the pay packet transfers family benefit from the woman to the man. In measured tones, the Social Security Advisory Committee report states:

"it is retrograde to divert resources out of the hands of the person most closely concerned with providing for children's needs."

I can put it more bluntly than that. It is totally wrong to claw back money from mothers that is rightly theirs. I hope that I have the support of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who has already left the Chamber. I hope that women's organisations throughout the country will make their demands felt. That has to be changed.

The overall impression left by the overwhelming mass of responses to the Green Paper is of a botched muddle and a complete loss of direction. It is a series of proposals without any coherence remaining and with more and more inconsistencies and problems exposed, commanding ever-growing public hostility and masquerading simply as a cloak for old-fashioned Tory cuts. It has no political mandate whatever, since not only was there no word about it in the Tory election manifesto but Ministers are strenuously showing every sign of their anxiety to rush the proposals through so that the electorate will not have an opportunity to vote on them in the next election.

There is no group closely associated with the implementation of the proposals that wants them. The employers reject the extra administrative burden imposed on them by family credit and personal portable pensions, which contradicts the Government's policy of so-called "lifting the burden." DHSS staff have made it clear that they will not co-operate with the more extreme and

[Mr. Meacher]

punitive elements of the package and the directors of social services are not willing to be drawn into an exercise that is deliberately designed to increase deprivation. Local authorities have made it clear that they are adamantly opposed to being forced, yet again, into an over-hasty timetable that will produce another monumental fiasco like that of two years ago.

Morale in the Civil Service has plummeted to an all-time low over the Green Paper. That is perhaps the most far-reaching and serious consequence of the whole episode. One has to ask how the Secretary of State can perpetrate two appalling gaffes over the board and lodging regulations and produce a Green Paper that is greeted with almost universal hostility and ridicule and is riddled throughout with inconsistencies, revealing how little the basic problems have been thought through. The answer is that there is a bunker mentality prevailing at the Elephant and Castle. Top civil servants who do not share Ministers' political prejudices have been sidelined—

Mr. Fowler: Nonsense.

Mr. Meacher: I shall write to the Secretary of State to provide clear evidence to substantiate what I am saying.

Mr. Fowler: Please do.

Mr. Meacher: Advice to Ministers is tailored——

Mr. Fowler: What the hon. Gentleman has just said is totally without foundation. It is untrue and an even bigger load of nonsense than most of his speech so far.

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman is talking through his teeth. He is talking falsely and untruly. I cannot use the word "lie", but I would if I were able to, because he is grossly misleading the House. I know perfectly well what I am talking about and so do the civil servants in the Box and those from the Department who are listening to the debate. Advice to Ministers is being tailored increasingly to what it is known Ministers want to hear.

At least one senior civil servant with a distinguished record according to the highest traditions of independent public service has simply been shut out by the Secretary of State. It is because the full range of independent and objective advice no longer reaches Ministers, and because Ministers have undermined the integrity of their Department by politically abusing the channels of communication, that blunder after blunder is being committed, as we can all see.

That is not the way to run a great Department of State. That is why the Secretary of State cannot evade personal responsibility for the way in which he has devalued the Civil Service and sapped the morale of those whom he should be leading. If the right hon. Gentleman had any honour in him, he would know that the only honourable course for him after the fiasco of the Green Paper's near universal dismissal would be to withdraw those rejected documents and resign.

4.56 pm

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), in his exaggerated attack upon my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his suggestion that there is no mandate for the legislation, which was outlined in the Queen's Speech, on the social security review, seems to suggest that he is concerned that that legislation will receive a wider welcome in the country when it is judged at the next general election. That is what will happen. If it was the bad piece of legislation that he tries to suggest it is, he would welcome the fact that the review will be legislation by the next general election. Judging by his speech, there is not a good word to be said for it, so one would assume that it would bring votes to his party. He knows that my right hon. Friend has had the courage to grasp a nettle to which he continually refers. The hon. Gentleman says that he will do something about it, but never spells it out in detail. He is concerned that the review and the legislation will be accepted by the country for what it is—a real attempt to review and improve the present system of social security.

There is much in the Queen's Speech about which I am delighted. When I look at the speech I recognise that many of the policies were spelt out in great measure in the Conservative manifesto in 1983. I have to say to my right hon. Friend and the Government that there is one measure that was not in the manifesto. That measure relates to the Bill to remove statutory restrictions on shop hours. I do not understand how that Bill has managed to find its way into party politics. When, like many other hon. Members, I attended a Remembrance day service in my constituency yesterday, I found myself wondering what Remembrance day will be like once that Bill had become legislation, if that happened. I found myself wondering what will replace the quiet towns and villages of our country with the processions of ex-service men and women going to their various churches to attend Remembrance day services when the shops are open and the streets are full of traffic and the clamour of people. When that happens, if it does, something will have gone out of the Remembrance day that all of us can remember—a special dignity will have been taken from it. I shall regret that considerably.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): May I be of some assistance to my hon. Friend? We do not have laws in Scotland which prohibit trading on Sundays. However, the Remembrance Sunday services that I attended in my constituency were not blighted by the law in Scotland, which does not require people to close their shops on Sundays.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comment. He is talking about Scotland, but the Scots, the English and the Welsh are separate nationalities with separate traditions. I ask him to recognise that what may apply in Presbyterian Scotland does not necessarily apply in Anglican England. Can he also tell me how—perhaps the Scots will exempt themselves from this—Easter day will not become one more shopping day, or Christmas day will not become the first day of the Christmas sales? I regret that deeply. I cannot see any reason why we should give commercialism so much pre-eminence in our thoughts when most of us believe that our nation needs a revival of spiritual values.

If I regret that legislation, I do not regret the presence, in the Queen's Speech, of a Bill to reform social security. Its intention is to simplify the present structure—who will argue that the present structure is not enormously complex—to make it more effective and to ensure that assistance goes to those in need. The proposals have their critics; indeed, there are those—to this extent I follow

the hon. Member for Oldham, West—who believe that the concept of a social fund lacks definition. There are misgivings about the loans which will be made available. Will they be anything but a burden to those who receive them? No doubt the Government's White Paper will spell out in more detail those aspects of the Bill.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services referred to meeting real needs. I ask him to consider whether a social security system that pays attention to the needs of the disabled, but not to those who are victims of medical accidents, has a major defect. There is still time to add something to the White Paper to cover that point. For this reason, I shall restrict my comments as to how patients should be compensated for errors made in their medical treatment, not by litigation but within the social security system. Two points must be considered. First, the physical suffering and disability which may be caused to a patient and, secondly, the effect that enforced hospitalisation can have on the business responsibility of anyone, but especially the self-employed.

At present, when a serious mistake is made during treatment, the only redress lies through the courts. Doctors and surgeons can be sued for negligence under the law of tort. Compensation is not obtained easily, and it usually takes years of litigation and huge legal costs before it is awarded. A recent example was the case of Mr. Peter Kelly of Dungannon, who, during an appendicitis operation, suffered cardiac arrest which resulted in brain damage. He had to wait 12 years before he finally received compensation of £400,000 in June this year. Thus for 12 years his family was obliged to care for him without the additional resources which were presumably part of the compensation that he received. The settlement was described by the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 1 July 1985 as being

"negotiated between the plaintiffs and the insurers of the doctors involved".—[*Official Report*, 1 July 1985; Vol. 82, c. *80*.]

Nobody admitted liability. One may wonder who was responsible.

Sadly, Peter Kelly's case is not an exception. On average, cases involving negligence last for seven years. In one case, a baby was presumed to have suffered brain damage after forceps were used on its head six times to assist delivery. When this failed, the baby was born by caesarian section. Initially, the plaintiffs in the case, which was known as Whitehouse *v* Jordan, were awarded £100,000. The defendant's appeal against the award was allowed by the Court of Appeal and endorsed by the House of Lords in 1981. The case and the appeal turned on whether the senior registrar who had been present at the delivery had pulled too long and too hard with the forceps and whether, if he had done so, it amounted to an error of clinical judgment rather than negligence. Mr. Gerald Robertson, writing about the case in the *Modern Law Review* in July 1981, commented:

"The most disturbing aspect of the *Whitehouse* case is that it represents all that is wrong with the present system of compensating victims of medical accidents. It emphasises the delay inherent in the system—11 years elapsed between the plaintiff's birth and the House of Lords' decision. It emphasises the expense of the system — the legal costs involved in *Whitehouse*, charged to the legal aid fund, will almost certainly be far in excess of the original award of damages. Above all it illustrates how much of a lottery personal injury litigation is and how heavily the odds are stacked against the plaintiff if an allegation of medical negligence is involved."

In another article on medical negligence in the *New Law Journal* of 6 January 1984, Mr. Michael Jones wrote:

"It is widely acknowledged that in cases of medical negligence the plaintiff faces an uphill task. In 1978 the Pearson Commission reported that the proportion of successful claims for damages in tort is much lower for medical negligence than for all negligence cases. Some payment is made in 30-40 per cent. of claims compared with 86 per cent. of all personal injury claims.

The low compensation rate of the victims of medical accidents is, however, partly due to legal impediments which make it extremely difficult for plaintiffs to *prove* negligence. The situation is the more poignant since not only are some victims failing to receive the compensation that their cases merit, but on average their injuries are likely to be much more serious than for other types of accident".

The proof of negligence remains the main hurdle to be jumped by anyone seeking compensation.

There are various descriptions of medical negligence. It seems that the words of Lord Fraser of Tullybelton in the Whitehouse *v* Jordan case in 1981 are the most easily understood. He sought to draw a distinction between an error of judgment and negligence and said:

"The true position is that an error of judgment may, or may not, be negligent; it depends on the nature of the error. If it is one that would not have been made by a reasonably competent professional man professing to have the standard and type of skill that the defendant held himself out as having, and acting with ordinary care, then it is negligent. If, on the other hand, it is an error that a man, acting with ordinary care, might have made, then it is not negligence."

As the law stands, whether it is negligence or an error of judgment is a matter for lawyers and judges. It is of less interest to the patient who may have been injured—who may have been made extremely ill and endured weeks of additional hospitalisation, or even disfigurement for life. He may think it is worth seeking redress through the courts, or he may grin and bear it if the injury is not too severe. Either way, he will want to know what happened to cause his injury.

Action for the Victims of Medical Accidents stated in its annual report for 1983-84 that in 70 per cent. of the cases in which it had been involved financial considerations were secondary to people's wish for an honest explanation of what went wrong and an apology if that was in order. Sadly, such simple wishes are seldom fulfilled. Medical staff and hospital authorities do not rush forward with explanations and apologies. Patients and their relations can write to ask for information, but seldom receive it. Instead they are met with what one frustrated patient described to me as "a wall of silence".

As a Member of Parliament, quite apart from being a hospital patient, I have heard from far too many constituents of how they have written to a hospital authority seeking information and received what I think is called a holding answer — a completely innocuous communication which tells one nothing.

How can we get over this problem? How can we get full explanations, more accountability from doctors and a better way of compensating for acts of medical negligence without resorting to the courts? The answer is to scrap the present system and replace it with a no-faults compensation scheme. The patient suffers, whether the injury or damage is caused by error or negligence. There should be a way of offering compensation without the expense of protracted litigation. My right hon. Friend will know that two such schemes already exist—one in New Zealand and the other in Sweden. The New Zealand scheme started in 1974 and apparently handles about 130,000 claims for accidental injuries of all sorts each year. It is comprehensive and, therefore, costly.

[Mr. McNair-Wilson]

The New Zealand scheme has been criticised on two grounds. First, the amounts paid out are substantially less than what might be awarded following a successful legal action. Secondly, it does not involve a rigorous review of the professional circumstances surrounding a particular case and so may lead to a lowering of medical standards.

The Swedish approach, on the other hand, seems to overcome these difficulties, although its scope is more limited. The cost of the scheme in 1981 was 50p per person per annum. The liability was borne by insurance companies with the county councils paying the premiums. The amounts paid in compensation were comparable to what the courts would be likely to award, and claimants were given the choice of using the scheme or going to court. There is a continuous review of the background to claims so that accepted medical practice which has produced unfortunate results may be changed and improved.

If we compare those two schemes with the situation in this country where we rely on litigation, we find that the current financial situation is as follows. The 80,000 doctors employed in the NHS and the 10,000 doctors in private practice contribute £336 per head per annum to one or other of the medical protection societies in England, Scotland and Wales. This provides the societies with an income of £33 million a year. The doctors' contributions are allowed for in their remuneration by the NHS and are tax deductible. Thus the patients, who are also the taxpayers, are contributing money to the medical profession to defend itself against possible claims for negligence by those same patients.

In addition, £1·5 million was spent by the legal aid fund in the last year for which figures are available in pursuing cases of medical negligence against health authorities. The health authorities incurred legal costs in defending themselves in these cases and also paid out sums of money in damages. The total sum is therefore very large indeed. Yet the net effect on so many of the victims of medical accidents is remarkably small.

I do not criticise doctors for wishing to defend themselves against charges of negligence. What else can they do in the present situation? If we seriously intend to reform the social security system and, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services put it,

"to provide for each other at times of need",

we should give careful consideration to including a no-faults compensation scheme in the new Bill, thus reforming social security by doing away with the concept of negligence and bringing compensation to those most in need.

5.12 pm.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I strongly support the recommendations made by the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson), who called for a no-faults compensation scheme. The arguments against this idea are bogus, and there is no reason for the Government not to bring forward such a scheme to deal with the gross injustices which we see perpetrated every day. I hope that the Government will take careful note of the words of the hon. Member for Newbury and that some action will be taken.

The main issue, which was outlined at the beginning of the debate—the social security review—is a euphemism for cost cutting by the Government, for replacing the existing scheme with a shoddy and shabby substitute. The Secretary of State has given the game away with his first objective, which is that social security should be consistent with the Government's overall objectives for the economy. He can say that again. That is what the review is all about. The Government are botching the economy and they are now cutting social security because they have botched the economy. That is the reason for this so-called review.

Disabled people are not supposed to be a part of this social security review. Their problems are supposed to be tackled shortly after the survey by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. However, disabled people will be hit very badly by this review's proposals, particularly by being deprived of the additional allowances of supplementary benefit. All recipients of supplementary benefit will lose the additional allowances, but the vast majority of the additional allowances go to the sick and disabled. Of the 14 additional allowances provided from supplementary benefit, 10 are directly related to disability.

Disability organisations have said that additional allowances make up between 13 and 30 per cent. of the income of those disabled people who depend on supplementary benefit, and the average is 20 per cent. That is a large sum of money, which disabled people look for each time they draw their supplementary benefit. Richard Berthoud of the Policy Studies Institute has said that even now the less common, but no less needed, additional allowances do not reach the people who need them. For example, of those entitled to the additional allowances for laundry, clothing and extra baths, fewer than one-tenth receive them. There is nothing wrong with the provision. The fault lies with the Government for allowing pressure and overwork in DHSS offices to prevent its implementation. The system can and should be made to work.

The Government's response is negligent and negative. They have scrapped all the additional allowances and replaced allowances which have been carefully and delicately created over a long period with a single disability premium.

The Government are seeking administrative simplicity. That is the second objective stated by the Secretary of State. Nobody would ask one surgeon to carry out the same operation on all sick or disabled people. The economic needs of disabled people are just as varied as their medical needs. Replacing the carefully tailored additional allowances for very severely disabled people with one premium is hamfisted and absurd. The most severely disabled people receiving the additional allowances will inevitably suffer when those allowances are averaged out with the disability premium. Individual care will be sacrificed to cost cutting and administrative convenience. In social security terms, a caring nurse is to be replaced by an inhuman robot.

If these deplorable policies are adopted, I urge the Government to introduce a special premium for very severely disabled people. Otherwise, the Government will be hitting the most severely disabled. That would be absolutely intolerable. According to the Policy Studies Institute, the new disability premium proposed under this review will at best reach less than half of those supplementary benefit claimants with related health needs. Even worse—*[Interruption.]* I hope that the Minister

will listen—disabled children and disabled dependants are likely to get lost in the system. It would be very regrettable if that happened.

So much for the Secretary of State's first objective of meeting genuine needs. If children and dependants get lost in the system, we shall be failing to meet the needs of the most deserving. I hope that the Government will consider the matter urgently and make special provision to accommodate disabled children and dependants.

Ministers say that the disability premium will be bolstered by the social fund, which supplements the proposed income supplement. The social fund will be a social disaster for thousands of disabled people. They will need, and have to apply for, the social fund, but disability is not identified as an element of the fund. In addition, the fund will be subject to rigid cash limits and the applicant in, say, November could get nothing if the cash had run out in October. How can the needs of disabled people vary with the months of the year? It does not make sense that an applicant cannot get the cash one month because it ran out the month before. The Government must reconsider their plans, because a cash limit on the social fund is absurd.

Another crucial failing of the social fund is that it will be locally administered, which means that, as with the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, there will be terrible inconsistencies. Disabled people will receive or be refused grants from the social fund depending on where they live, rather than on their needs. It is commonplace for able-bodied persons to misunderstand the needs of disabled people. It appalls severely disabled people that able-bodied people in various DHSS offices around the country will be able to decide whether to allocate sums from the social fund.

When applicants are turned down, as some disabled people will be, there will be no right of appeal. How can the Government justify no right of appeal for severely disabled people? They may be turned down because the cash has run out, because they do not qualify, because they have red hair or because they are wearing a unilateral disarmament badge. They can be turned down for any reason. It is wrong that they will not be told what the reason is and are to be given no right of appeal.

I hope that the Government will reconsider the matter, because they are depriving disabled people of additional allowances that they receive by right and replacing them with an option to beg. Where is the dignity in begging for an additional allowance and being deprived of a basic right?

Disabled people have been assured by Ministers that they should not worry because they will get loans under the new scheme. That means that they can turn from the begging bowl to the pawn shop and become involved in a vicious downward spiral of debts.

The emphasis on budgeting will lead to an awkward relationship between the DHSS and social service departments, especially in community care. Ministers have referred to a "one-off" payment, which has led disabled people to fear that Ministers do not understand what community care means. Domestic help for severely disabled people is a vital prerequisite to keeping them out of institutions. It is not a "one-off" affair—to use the Government's jargon. It is urgent, vital and irreplaceable. Domestic help is a necessity for disabled people all the time; it cannot be provided by a one-off or occasional payment.

So much for the present social security proposals as they affect disabled people. It is disturbing that the comprehensive proposals on disabled people will not come until the OPCS survey is completed. The social security review proposals mean that, when the comprehensive review is published, disabled people will be considered as they are at that time, rather than as they are now. Disabled people will begin from an impoverished and demeaning position, because their additional allowances will have been taken from them. That is a cause for grave concern.

Instead of hacking disabled people's benefits and replacing them with inadequate, inappropriate, ill-thought-out substitutes, the Government should devote their energies to creating a comprehensive national disability income with a basic income and costs allowance graded to meet the varying costs of disability. Social security should not be a catchpenny, grudging, minimal, discretionary last resort. It is not an optional extra. Social security should mean what it says, especially for disabled people. Social security should mean freedom from hardship, insecurity and fear. But it is precisely those freedoms which are being denied disabled people under this Government. I urge the Government to think again.

5.27 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxstowe): It is always a privilege to follow the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), especially when he speaks about disability on which he is uniquely knowledgeable in the House. However, the right hon. Member was uncharacteristically hard on the Government, although I know that they will have listened with great care to his points.

Any Government with the courage to tackle social security, with a review for the first time since Beveridge, are to be commended. Any Government with the courage to tackle animal welfare for the first time since 1876 are to be commended. Any Government who tackle the task of improving the quality of our schools for the 40 per cent. of children who get the least out of education are to be commended.

The Queen's Speech shows that in some areas we are making progress and not walking by on the other side. I am sure that when the social security White Paper is published as a result of discussions on the Green Paper, the contribution of the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South will be taken into account.

I do not wish to speak specifically on education and social security, which are the subjects for today's debate. I want to speak on the part of the Queen's Speech that refers to overseas development and our aid budget. [HON. MEMBERS: "That was on Friday."] I was here on Friday. It was not Conservative Members who made the long speeches that prevented me from being able to contribute on Friday.

I make no apology for speaking about aid during a debate on education and social security, although I know that the Ministers in the Chamber do not have specific responsibility. However, they have an overall Cabinet responsibility, so it is right that I should raise this issue today.

Members of the Select Committee who had the opportunity to travel widely through the Sahara appreciate what a safety net really is. Those who take an interest in social security affairs — that covers virtually all hon. Members—are speaking in this debate of the safety net as it applies to people in Britain. On the other hand, those

[Mr. Jim Lester]

who visited the refugee camp at Nyala in the western Sudan, at Wadshafife in the eastern Sudan or at Derudeb in the Red sea hills appreciate what life is like when there is no safety net, when there is no shelter and where people depend on humanitarian aid from other countries for every mouthful of food, every minimal bit of medical attention and every glass of water.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science will know that as recently as this year I have seen schools in the Sudan and Gambia where it is considered lucky to possess a blackboard, because a blackboard is regarded as a major teaching aid. I have seen children being taught as they sat in the sand, scratching in the sand with sticks because they have no pencils and paper. That is why I make no apology for speaking on this issue today.

Because of my intention to take part in this debate, I examined carefully the speech made on Friday, in response to the debate on overseas development, by the Minister for Overseas Development. I support the theme that was followed in that debate by my right hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice), by my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay).

There was a distinct lack of contributions from Opposition Members on this issue. All who spoke on the subject talked of the moral imperative of maintaining our aid programme. But many of us feel that it is time to reverse the trend of reducing our aid budget. The need in the Third world has never been greater and there is now more chance of long-term agricultural development being successful in those countries than at any previous time.

Those who have watched this subject over the years look forward with interest to the Chancellor's statement tomorrow on the net aid programme for 1986-87 because, unless our total aid is increased from the £1·170 million that has been foreshadowed in Treasury documents, it will still represent a decrease in real terms of between 1 and 2 per cent.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the reference in the Queen's Speech to maintaining "a substantial aid programme" is the hypocrisy that it obviously is? I hope that he is saying that.

Mr. Lester: No, I am not saying that, especially as we have not yet had the Chancellor's statement. I hope that the Chancellor will take note of my remarks, will have listened to earlier speeches on the subject and will have acted accordingly.

If the present aid figure is not altered, there will have been an overall decrease in our aid budget since 1978-79 of 18 per cent. It is no comfort to quote the OECD average of 0·36 per cent. and this country's total of 0·33 per cent., because if we delete the United States figure of 0·24 per cent. — which is not dissimilar from the lamentable figure for the USSR of 0·18 per cent.—we are left with the average for the OECD European nations, a figure which is more similar to that applying to the United Kingdom, of 0·50 per cent. I hope that we shall take that as a more realistic percentage to compare with.

I support the Chancellor's bullish remarks to the effect that we are now entering the sixth year of continuous growth in Britain's economy—*[Interruption.]*—a trend that all hon. Members should welcome. Therefore, I see no reason why reversing the reduction in the aid budget, reappraising it and redirecting it could not be afforded. Now must be the most opportune time to do that.

Those who are interested in these issues will welcome the fact that rains in many parts of Africa have lessened by half the need for emergency food aid. However, we now have a tremendous opportunity, with an improved policy background being adopted by African Governments in many of the affected countries, to devote our aid to the real solution, which is reversing the decline in the overall agricultural performance, which in spite of drought, civil war and inhospitable Governments is the root cause of famine. That is where we can most effectively apply our aid programme. Hon. Members should examine early-day motion 25, which provides an opportunity to express a view on the subject.

The Select Committee has already produced a major report, "Famine in Africa", which the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has acknowledged as being "very helpful." In that report we applauded the Government's efforts in relation to emergency relief. We spoke of how effectively they had used the £95 million, plus the further £80 million that the Minister for Overseas Development mentioned today at Question Time.

However, an examination of the normal Contingency Fund of the Overseas Development Agency shows a contingency of about £15 million a year. Although I accept the Minister's word that no long-term programme was diverted to meet that total, he must accept that if the normal Contingency Fund is £15 million a year, if there had not been the famine and disaster, the balance of that budget would have been spent on long-term development. It was reasonable for the Select Committee to say that that deficit should be placed back in the ODA budget to enable it to pursue the long-term development proposals that provide the only way to prevent famine.

In addition to the Select Committee report, the all parliamentary group on overseas development recently published a report entitled, "UK Aid to African Agriculture" — a careful analysis of what has been happening to our overseas programme in recent times. I shall not deal with that report today, except to refer to its conclusion:

> "During our inquiry and in the course of the African country visits we have formed the impression that the UK aid programme in support of agricultural development in Africa has many strengths. Its obvious successes outweigh the weaknesses and disappointments which have been documented. There is an urgent need for more official aid in the sector, and the improving policy environment in so many Africa countries is an assurance that the aid can be applied effectively."

I commend that policy statement to the Government.

It has been said that the deficit in our overseas aid would be met by private flows of funds by way of export credits, direct investment, bank lending and by the voluntary agencies. However, we show in our report, sadly, that UK private flows to the Third world went down from £4,527 million in 1980 to £1,420 million in 1984. In view of that substantial reduction, it is not correct to say that private flows would make up for the deficit.

I say with all the force at my command that now is the time, when public concern, knowledge and interest in this matter have never been higher; when about 20,000 of our constituents lobbied Parliament less than a fortnight ago; and when parliamentary interest has never been higher — there being at least six early-day motions on the

Order Paper signed by individuals and groups of hon. Members drawing attention to this subject — for the Chancellor to respond positively to the points that I have made. Equally, I hope that Ministers responsible for social security and education will add their voices to the requests that I and others have made, so helping to ensure that when the Chancellor speaks tomorrow he responds positively.

5.39 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridge, North-East): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), whose concern for the problems of the Third world are shared widely, and specifically by my right hon. and hon. Friends. I am also pleased to see the Secretary of State for Education in his place, because I shall deal predominantly with education matters.

Commenting on the Education Act 1944, *The Times Educational Supplement* wrote:

> "The war was almost lost because this country lacked a sufficiency of skilled workers: the peace will certainly be lost if it is found to lack either a sufficiency of skilled workers or of citizens skilled in the art of democracy."

That was written over 40 years ago, and perhaps the most damning indictment of the Government is their failure to foster such skills. We have a lower rate of participation in higher education than nearly all our competitors. Our investment in basic scientific research is lower. Only recently it was announced in France that the Government were increasing support for such research by over 14 per cent. By contrast, ours will fall by over 10 per cent. in the next few years.

The Queen's Speech says that two Bills affecting education will be introduced. One is to deal with the governing bodies, the other with appraisal of teachers, and on both the House will await details with keen expectation. I welcome the announcement that the duties of governing bodies will be clarified, while their composition will also change. This is an attempt to clear up one of the grey areas left by the 1944 Act. It is not the first attempt, but we welcome the decision.

Certain recent events show that some clarification is desperately needed in a sector where the good will that underpinned the 1944 Act has been dissipated. It is difficult to comment in detail, but I shall assume that the legislation will follow the lines set out in "Better Schools". We welcome the strong commitment to the idea that a school needs an identity of its own and should

> "serve the community from which it draws its pupils".

Secondly, we welcome the decision not to create an inbuilt majority on the governing body as has been argued in the Green Paper. That was once the policy of my colleagues, but we, too, have seen the error of our ways. A successful school comes about through free discussion, co-operation, and above all genuine partnership.

However, other questions about the composition remain. We should like to see something done about those councillors who seem to collect school governorships as others collect stamps. While I am sure that many of these are committed and give generously of their time and experience, I am equally sure that there are others who do not carry out their responsibilities fully.

We should also like to see some action taken in respect of those local education authorities which appoint members of governing bodies from their circle of friends, their political allies and especially those who failed to win the last round of council elections. It must be recognised that being a school governor is a responsible position, not a token of party service. We have an honours system to provide those.

We should like to know whether the proposals now include room for student participation and for membership of non-teaching staff. Both these groups have a right to participate more fully in school organisation and will have a unique and valuable perspective to bring. I have always believed that a parent-teacher association has it wrong— it should be a parent-staff association, because the input of the school caretaker, the school cook and even the lollipop lady is relevant to the government of the school. It is clear that clarification of the duties of governing bodies is overdue. As *The Guardian* pointed out recently, the only people who benefit from the present uncertainty are the lawyers. It is certainly not the children.

Where does the Secretary of State envisage, in cases of discipline, for example, that the final authority will rest? Does he feel that it would now be right to have a general appeals system for pupils who feel aggrieved by their punishment or other treatment? The current crisis at Poundswick makes this all the more necessary.

Above all, I urge the Government to be clear right from the outset of this new legislation about the precise balance that they are seeking to create. It will not be good enough to tell LEAs that they must consult the governing body before deciding on teacher-managment issues because that will leave room for uncertainties that may well blow up in our faces.

I shall now raise some queries about teacher appraisal which I know the Secretary of State will consider as he prepares his legislation. There seems to be some confusion as to what exactly the appraisal will be for. Is it supposed to help teachers to be more effective in the classroom, or will it help the LEAs in what the Government increasingly refer to as "the management" of the teaching force? Those two are not necessarily the same thing and do not necessarily imply the same method of assessment. The latter language of management and deployment is not necessarily the best way to describe the way that teachers are treated. I may be accused of anti-industry bias, but I do not believe that schools can be run on the same basis as a production line.

We have questions about the need for a nationally imposed scheme. If the proposed Bill is to give powers that might be used, will the Secretary of State tell us under what conditions he will invoke them? If the Bill is to set up a national system, what happened to the consultations and projects mentioned in the White Paper?

Our other questions concern the national nature of what is to be introduced. Is the Secretary of State convinced that a national scheme is the best way? Is there not room for different aims between LEAs and thus room for different measuring posts? The LEAs remain the employers of teachers, and those with the best knowledge, so surely the varied schemes that are already in operation show that there is scope for local excellence. Why does the right hon. Gentleman assume that only his Department has anything valid to say on this subject?

We are absolutely opposed to linking the appraisal system to pay. Merit money is really a euphemism for low basic rates of pay and the further abdication of responsibility by the Government. We believe that any scheme must be open, and probably requires some sort of appeal status, and that the issue of records must be clarified in advance. Who will have access to them, how

[Mr. Clement Freud]

long will they be kept for and what will be the machinery for correcting them? There must be such machinery, and people must know of its existence.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that what he is proposing, as I understand it, is a considerable increase in the kind of bureaucratic nonsense that we already have overburdening our education system? This cannot be right.

Mr. Freud: I am glad to tell the hon. Gentleman that I am commenting upon the bureaucratic nonsense that has already been proposed. I counsel the Secretary of State to heed the words of two of his Department's publications. "Quality in Schools: Evaluation and Appraisal" says:

> "Whole-school evaluation and teacher assessment takes a great deal of time and a considerable amount of effort. This not only requires teachers to have the time: it also calls for their support and goodwill. For this to be forthcoming a healthy perception of status and morale are critical and need to be actively sought for."

Her Majesty's Inspectorate's paper on "Good Teachers" says:

> "It is important to remember that . . . no teacher performs in isolation. There is much that impinges on all teachers work which lies outside their control . . . the contribution of even the best teachers can be limited by outside factors . . . a wide ranging and flexible approach to assessing the contributions which teachers make is therefore necessary, bearing in mind the variety of factors which have an impact on the quality of their work".

Does the Secretary of State genuinely believe that all the desirable qualities can be measured? I remind him that the police have had to drop the word "integrity" from their check list.

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman is saying. Does he believe in the principle that there should be appraisal of teachers?

Mr. Freud: In a word, yes, but it is impossible to quantify exactly how one will appraise teachers. Much must depend on good practice rather than on specifics.

The measures proposed in the Gracious Speech begin to look pretty irrelevant when we remember the current situation in our schools. The Government have said repeatedly that the key to educational quality is the teaching force. Why, then, will the Secretary of State not put his words into action? Why will he not press the Cabinet to relax the grant penalties on local authorities, including Conservative authorities, that want to offer a decent wage to teachers? Why will he not consider changing the Remuneration of Teachers Act so that pay and conditions can be discussed together and some stability introduced into the process? Why will he not realise—and if he does, why will he not come out and tell everyone—that even on free market criteria teachers are underpaid, as well as being undervalued?

The GCSE looks like another casualty of this dispute. I know that the Secretary of State has been urged to postpone it by those who believe in it but who have the task of implementing it—the head teachers. I also know that this is one of the Secretary of State's most prized initiatives which appears to have encouraged a sort of "anything but that" mentality. However, there seems no way in which that can come on stream as projected, and the right hon. Gentleman must decide whether the current system is so bad that it is worth replacing by a deficient substitute, however well intentioned the new GCSE may be.

I know that the programme of rolling teacher training was always ambitious, but I understand that these problems are added to in some areas where subject representatives have yet to be appointed and criteria referencing guidelines yet to be issued. Children will be making their subject choices early next yar, and there is an overwhelming argument for postponing that until the system can be got right.

There is a lot in the Gracious Speech about law and order—much more than about education. One is struck by the contrast between the two. I am not referring to pay, although that is a common point of comparison. There are other similarities which I believe the Government should remember in their treatment of the two professions. Both are dedicated to the notion of public service and to the ideal of the sort of society we want to create for our children. Both are about participation and self-discipline. Both have to do with the setting of moral authority and respect, shared values and leadership.

Many of the young people who riot attend school and face teachers. The social conditions that underlie public disorder also underlie our education system. The teachers and the police are faced with the same individuals and the same problems. The teachers are often blamed for the problems with which the police must deal, but while the police are comparable with the fire brigade, in that they deal with trouble after it has taken hold, teachers are in the business of prevention.

I do not see how we can defensibly treat the two services as anything but interdependent. They are part of the same process, and it is time that the Government remembered that. It is just plum wrong to neglect the schools and to expect the police to pick up the pieces. Just as I believe plastic bullets and community policing to be largely incompatible, so I believe that crumbling schools and policing-by-consent are equally unlikely companions.

I ask the Secretary of State to consider the recent round of public spending reviews. We know that his colleague the Secretary of State for the Environment fought for more cash for housing. We suspect that the Secretary of State for Social Services fought for more cash to meet the nurses' pay bill. Did the right hon. Gentleman also fight as tenaciously for his own Department?

We are dismayed by the repeated sacrifice of the education service. So, I believe, are the parents and so, I know, are the teachers. I hope that the Secretary of State will bear in mind the words of Jocelyn Stevens, rector of the Royal College of Art, who said:

> "When everyone else is fighting their corner by all the means at their disposal, to remain in the dressing room is a betrayal of one's cause."

5.55 pm

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): This Queen's Speech is a quiet, sensible mid-term package. I hope, among other things, to play an active role in the measures to reform public order law and to reform the nonsensical and immoral state of the law on Sunday trading.

However, I wish for a few moments to reflect on the central, underlying subjects mentioned in the Gracious Speech that are crucial to the whole future of

Conservativism and the hopes, aspirations and opportunities of our people. I refer to the linked matters of social security reform, reductions in taxation and reform of the rates.

It is essential for Government to realise that these subjects are inextricably linked. The energies of the Treasury, the Department of Health and Social Security and that section of the Department of the Environment which is responsible for the rating system must combine to create one coherent system of taxation, national and local, and income support that provides properly for the needs of the less well off; offers incentive to all who are able to seek work and to help themselves; and renders those who spend on our behalf accountable at every level of income to those who elect them.

We must show through the reformed system that we recognise that as well as income and pensions, benefits, rebates and entitlements are all essential ingredients of family income. As far as possible, each must be tailored to the individual assisted, not to the service provided, thus leaving the individual to decide for himself how to spend his money or how to vote for it to be spent.

While there may have to be differences between housing benefit entitlements for those in urban areas with high rent and rates, such differences should be dealt with primarily by central Government support grant, and any housing benefit entitlement of the individual should be paid to the individual at the same level, whether or not the local authority is prudent or profligate.

Such a new system will involve the substantial integration of the tax and social security systems and the housing benefit system. As personal income from employment or contributory pension rights rises, entitlements must taper but must not suddenly be cut off, otherwise the incentive to work or to save is destroyed. Such an integrated reform cannot be achieved in a single parliamentary Session. It is now, at mid-term in this Parliament, that the country expects us to look ahead, to light beacons beyond the next election and to show a vision of the kind of society that we as Conservatives are seeking to achieve.

The means of achieving this—computers and funding—will soon be to hand. The computers will soon be available, and, thanks to careful housekeeping, the money is also likely to be available. The crucial technical requirement is computerisation. The computers for the social security system are soon to come on stream, and computerisation by the Inland Revenue should be achieved in the early 1990s.

Tax, national insurance, social security benefits and housing benefit must all be integrated into one system. The notion that the individual must contribute in order to pay for his benefits, which is the principle underlying the national insurance system, can remain and can continue to be reflected in the effective tax rates, but only with the sophistication made possible by the computer can the idea of basic support—tapering off as the individual raises his income by self-help—be put into practice.

The second ingredient, at which Opposition Members laugh but which they would utterly fail to provide, is money. We know that a coherent scheme of tax credits, negative income tax or basic income guarantee—to refer to but three of its sobriquets in recent years—will cost money. I support the Government's declared aim of achieving tax cuts, but I strongly agree with the Secretary of State for Employment that those tax cuts should be aimed primarily at the lower end of the income scale.

Lord Stockton has again been in the news. When he left office, the man on the national average wage with a wife and two children paid just 8 per cent. of his income in tax. Today, the same man pays 20 to 25 per cent. He would pay even more if the Leader of the Opposition or alliance Members had their way.

We know that because of the combination of the effects of tax and of social security reductions a householder on a low wage has to increase his earnings from £75 to £125 a week before he sees another penny in his pocket. While that sort of unfairness continues, how can we speak of the Conservative virtues of self-help and self-reliance? That is where the money must be concentrated, so that by a combination of reduced taxation and soundly based but tapering benefits the family that relies upon our welfare system for the bedrock of its security may be given not only the benefit of that security but an incentive to try to help itself towards a better life.

I do not pretend that the task will be easy. In principle, execution and presentation it will require the most careful thought. But it is a beacon that we must light beyond the general election, towards which we must struggle now and which provides a worthy objective not only for this Parliament but for a third term of office.

6.1 pm

Mr. Jack Dormand (Easington): The references in the Gracious Speech to education bear as much relevance to the state of our education service as the remainder does to the state and the needs of our country. It is a clear sign of the Government's priorities.

I do not claim that education is in a state of chaos, although many people inside and outside the House use that word. It is not in a state of chaos because of the dedication of teachers, administrators and ancillary staff to the maintenance of standards, in spite of Government policies that are manifestly leading to a deterioration in our education service.

Education is receiving a smaller slice of a smaller cake. In 1983-84, it received 11·6 per cent. of Government expenditure, yet the planned expenditure for 1986-87 is 10·2 per cent. Those figures compare with 13 per cent. in 1973-74. I have taken those statistics from the Government documents "Economic Trends," "Government Expenditure Plans 1984-85 to 1986-87" and "Government Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1986-87". We all know that statistics can be made to mean a number of things, and I see that the Minister is nodding. I hope that he agrees with the remainder of what I have to say.

The recent report of the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations dealt with conditions in our schools, and paints a devastating picture of all aspects of the education of our children. If that report does not convince the Government, perhaps they will accept a number of reports in recent years by Her Majesty's inspectors, which present a similar story. I am tempted to spend some time quoting from both those sources, but I shall respect Mr. Speaker's request to confine speeches to 10 minutes.

The introduction to the document "Teaching Quality", published in March 1983, states:

[Mr. Jack Dormand]

"The school teacher's task is increasingly complex and demanding. Inevitably some schools and some teachers are showing signs of strain."

As the Americans would say, "You can say that again." Does the Secretary of State believe that the position still obtains, and if so, why?

Many people in this Chamber, in the teaching profession, in the world of education, together with parents and those with no direct connection with education believe that the position is worse than it was in 1983. This country spends less per head on education than any other country in the EEC, with the exception of Ireland and Italy. The Netherlands and Denmark spend twice as much as the United Kingdom. The HMI and PTA reports show quite conclusively what a low priority this Government place on the education of our children.

The Gracious Speech dealt with the appraisal of teachers, and I am glad that the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) referred to that. No one can disagree with the principle, but I find it curious that other professions — medicine, the law and engineering, for example—are not subjected to it. The Government frequently make misleading statements about teachers' unions being opposed to appraisal. The National Union of Teachers has made its view abundantly clear. I cannot do better than quote the joint statement issued earlier this year by the unions and, strangely enough, the Department of Education and Science, which states:

"The Secretary of State and representatives of the National Union of Teachers met on 21 January to discuss the appraisal of teachers, in the light of the Secretary of State's 30 October letter and his speech at the North of England Conference. There was considerable agreement on the value of a system of appraisal to support the professional development of teachers and the most effective management of the teacher force.

An NUT proposal that there should be further exploration of the prospects for joint consideration of appraisal matters was adopted and as a first step the Department will now make contact with the other teacher associations and the local authority associations."

Nothing could be clearer than that.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): The hon. Gentleman states that teachers' unions do not agree with appraisal, but the briefing from the National Union of Teachers——

Mr. Dormand: I did not say that; I said the opposite.

Dr. Clark: I am sorry. I thought that the hon. Gentleman said that teachers' unions would not agree with appraisal. I know that they certainly will agree.

Mr. Dormand: We all misunderstand each other from time to time. I think that the position is clear.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Chris Patten): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could help the House by outlining the NUT's position on conditions of service.

Mr. Dormand: The short answer is that I cannot do that at the moment, for the very good reason that I gave earlier.

I come now to a matter very much concerned with conditions of service, and want to put a straight question to the Minister. With great respect to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East, he did not ask the Minister the vital question, so I shall put it to the Minister now. Who is to carry out the appraisal? Some say that it should be head teachers. In most cases, they could make a contribution to an assessment, but they are not infallible, as many of us know. They also have their prejudices, like other human beings. Therefore, I take this opportunity to raise a very difficult problem. How do we get rid of—if I may use that expression—poor head teachers? The problem has existed for a long time and no one has yet found a solution. One could imagine what would happen if such a head teacher had to make an assessment of staff.

Can HMIs make the appraisal? I yield to no one in my admiration of HMIs. I have dealt with many of them, but they visit schools so seldom that it would be unjust if they dropped into a school occasionally and made important decisions that could affect the life and career of a teacher. Some argue that local education authority inspectors could make the assessment. The same argument applies to them as to HMIs. We must not forget that HMIs and LEA inspectors have a whole range of duties and that the assessment of teachers is only one small part of their work.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Waldon): All teachers recognise that appraisal takes place all the time, but it is of a closet nature. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we need an open and objective system that teachers can trust?

Mr. Dormand: The first part of what the hon. Gentleman said is correct and the second wrong.

If inspectors are to be given the task of assessment and if it is to be done properly, the Secretary of State and the local education authorities will have to recruit thousands of additional staff. That would be nonsense. The Government say:

"Legislation will be introduced . . . to promote the professional effectiveness of teachers."

The best advice that I can give the Government is "Forget it".

Before I came to the House of Commons I was education officer to a local authority. Part of my duty was to deal with incompetent teachers. They were few and far between. They were identified in the first instance by their colleagues. That is the continuing assessment to which the hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) referred. Only after that identification was I brought in.

If the Government intend to bring the panoply of inspection to the teaching profession, they are making a grave mistake. They are making a fundamental error, which will lead to antagonism and distrust. The proposal will defeat the Government's purpose. It is unrealistic and impracticable. I appreciate that the Secretary of State's intentions are laudable—they usually are—but in this he is mistaken. I ask him to think again.

6.14 pm

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): I am pleased to speak after the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand) because I also intend to devote my remarks to that part of the Queen's Speech which states:

"Legislation will be introduced for England and Wales to improve the management of schools and to promote the professional effectiveness of teachers."

I assume that the improvement in the management of schools will lead to legislation to require local education authorities to make a full disclosure of what it costs to run each school, including the cost of salaries, heating, books, equipment and cleaning so that all those interested in education will know what it costs a local education authority to run each school that it maintains.

That will lead to one specific matter which much exercises the Government's mind. That extra information

will make it easier to deal with the mounting problem of surplus school places, especially in those local education authority areas which, at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s—when money was to be had with ease—adopted the expensive three-tier comprehensive system. That system is now in great difficulties because of falling school rolls and surplus places.

I also understand that part of the Gracious Speech to mean that there will be enhanced management training for head teachers and for teachers who believe that they have an aptitude for school management as well as for teaching.

The word "promote" in the Gracious Speech appears to be a recognition of a long-term project. The first requirement of effective appraisal is a common understanding of the standard of performance required from each individual in his or her job. A great deal of advice from management in industry will be needed to make that part of the Gracious Speech effective.

In a circular dated 24 September this year my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science set out ways in which improved industry and education links would make sense for all. He listed various things that he would like to be achieved. Flowing from such an improvement in education and industry links surely there will be high quality advice from management on how best the education service can set about the immensely difficult task of a fair appraisal of teachers.

A recent HMI report on spending in schools and how that affects quality and performance is critical in some respects, but it underlines and encourages precisely what the Government are doing. Under the heading "Quality of Work" it states:

"In just over three-quarters of all the lessons seen the quality of the provision made by teachers was judged satisfactory or better."

On the quality of teaching the report states:

"Not surprisingly, in almost all lessons where the quality of pupils' work was judged satisfactory or better, it was the high quality of teaching which was considered to be the most significant contributor."

That is encouragement to the Government to press on with securing higher quality teaching. It is also an encouragement to the teaching profession and a recognition by that independent report of the dedication with which the overwhelming majority of teachers carry out their task.

The report contains three major warnings which cannot be ignored and which should occasion a careful loosening of the purse strings. The HMI report states:

"The present state of repairs in schools was judged to be less than satisfactory or poor in 57 LEAs . . . The present state of decoration in schools was judged to be less than satisfactory or poor in 65 LEAs . . . The current programme of maintenance was judged to be less than satisfactory or poor in 65 LEAs, almost the same as last year."

If that goes on, it will lead to precisely what the report refers to in its preamble on the state of the education service which says:

"good teaching can be neither nurtured nor sustained where resources are inadequate in quality and quantity . . . It would be wrong to suggest that these are the conditions in which most teachers now work, but they are those in which too many have to operate."

In view of what we read about a loosening of purse strings in other Departments, it is inevitable that those of us who take a special interest in education should believe that that report should put education in line for a careful loosening of the purse strings.

The Government have also announced recently a welcome encouragement for those who are adult and unemployed to take advantage of what the education service can offer. The recent circular about REPLAN, as it is called, referred to the funding arrangements and to the provision for the unemployed, and to the fact that the education service is funding this in both the Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office.

This should not be done entirely by the education service because the Manpower Services Commission in the past few years has steadily managed to take to itself funds which ought to go back to Elizabeth house and be part of the Department of Education and Science. It is interesting that, in the HMI report on provision for adult unemployed, it was said:

"In those authorities where provision was less than satisfactory the most common deficiencies were provision for the unemployed . . ."

This recognises that more must be done.

The Education Support Grants Act, together with money from the MSC, can realise the laudable aim of the Government in their recent circular of giving unemployed adults the opportunity of taking advantage of the education service.

Two other matters ought to attract funds from the MSC into the education service. A recent HMI report says that technology should be a compulsory subject for all young people in schools. That must, of course, also mean better in-service training. The inspectors themselves said that about a quarter of the teacher training institutions are not well organised and need to be better organised to fit in with the Government's laudable aim of increasing and improving the quality of science and technology training in schools.

As regards the current teachers' pay dispute, which has dominated the education debate since the House rose in July, I welcome the statement by the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers that it is to have its first full ballot on pay. I hope that it will go to the trouble of thoroughly explaining to its members exactly what is on offer from the Government. Unless that is properly explained in the ballot, we shall get a funny result.

New negotiating machinery is needed. It is something that the unions ought to be seen to be discussing more widely with their members. We do not need a brand new inquiry to steer the teaching profession and everybody out of their current pay difficulties. What the unions should have done in the past few months — some of them, anyway—is to make regular, effective and sustained use of the services of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. In spite of repeated offers of help from ACAS, one or two of the unions have failed to take up those offers. We are now in November. They should take up these offers immediately, because ACAS has a wealth of industrial advice on how to get out of this sort of situation.

The real danger is that the new general certificate of secondary education, which is of vital educational importance, and of exceptional importance to the career prospects of young people, is in jeopardy. It would be an unbelievably bad day if the classroom disruption were increased by the disruption of the postponement of the GCSE. It behoves unions to remember that, to examine the Government's offer in great detail, and to end classroom disruption.

6.23 pm

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) in the remarks that he made about teacher training. I am very pleased to see the Secretary of State for Education and Science on the Front Bench because I can address my remarks, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to him and make some suggestions for the improvement of science teaching in schools, and try to persuade him of the urgent need in the Cabinet for a Minister responsible for science, in the hope that he can use his influence with the Prime Minister. I hope that he has some.

Science and the teaching of science is a sadly neglected part of the education system, although we all agree that it is a crucial part of our development. It is also a crucial part of our reputation as a country and it is very important in the whole development of our standard of living. Yet we have no one in the House to answer for the Government's policy and practice of science. If we ask such a question, we are usually told that it is the Prime Minister's responsibility, that she is answerable for the Government's science policy as a whole, and that the individual departmental Ministers answer for the particular aspects of science that come within their own Departments. As the Minister of State for Social Security, who is sitting on the Front Bench knows, medical science is very much an interest of the Department of which he is a member.

That is not really good enough, however. The Prime Minister is responsible for the entire secret service operations of this country, but she could not be held responsible for the detailed operational or policy activities of that very extensive and costly branch of Government expenditure. Nor can she be held responsible for science policy. On the other hand, departmental Ministers are too involved with the trees to notice the forest and are engulfed in departmental activities and ambitions. As for the Department of Education and Science, which is supposed to look after university science and the research councils, the science part of the Department is very small indeed.

France has a Minister of Science and Technology. Germany has a Federal Science Minister. To whom do they talk about joint or separate science policies when they come to London? Do they talk to the Prime Minister? Do they talk to departmental Ministers? My guess is that they just do not come here to talk about that. When did the French Minister of Science and Technology last come to London on an official visit to discuss science policy questions of mutual interest? As Sir John Kingman, now Vice-Chancellor of Bristol university and formerly one of the Government's principal advisers on science policy, said recently, we absolutely need a Minister of science.

What is the Government's attitude to science policy? I hope that the Secretary of State will tell us. Have they got a clear policy? If so, it is not really very clear to us. I wish that they would let us know about it. I wish that they would set it out in clear terms for the benefit of the House which, even in its present rather dismal state of political division, is not without some intelligent interest in these matters. We need to know also for the benefit of the country what the Government's science policy is.

Last year, the Government had some very good advice from the National Advisory Body and from the University Grants Committee. The National Advisory Body recommended that student numbers in polytechnics, colleges of higher education and the like should not fall significantly below present levels for the rest of this century. Not only must numbers not be allowed to fall; additional resources must be provided to meet the increased demand for higher education, which seems to go on all the time, I am pleased to say, and to provide the equipment and research involved in continuing education. One of the junior Ministers must know all about this report, because he was the chairman of the National Advisory Body's executive committee at the time, and I believe that that report was presented to him.

More important perhaps, the UGC also published a report on higher education, demanding a halt to the cuts, and asking for substantial increases in resources. The Secretary of State will also know that the Select Committee on Social Services has compiled a cogent report on the serious effects of the UGC cuts on medical education, training and research. So the Government have had a lot of good advice. The Secretary of State will also recall that, as chairman of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee, I gave him the opportunity to address that distinguished body to explain his intentions.

It so happens that by today's post I received a letter from the chairman of the hospital junior staff committee of the British Medical Association about the dire effects of the cuts in the UGC grant on the training and employment of clinical academic staff in universities. The Secretary of State has delayed his decision about providing additional pay for clinical academic staff. He knows very well that the doctors and dentists working in the National Health Service have been the subject of recommendations for increased pay from their review body. It has always been the tradition that the academic staff should automatically receive the same pay increases as are awarded to National Health Service doctors and dentists.

This year the universities require additional funds to meet those obligations, and for several months the Secretary of State has delayed his decision whether to provide them. He is well aware that many NHS patients get the benefit of treatment from the clinical academic staff employed in the universities. It would be invidious to ask them to work beside NHS doctors who receive better pay as a result of the review body's award.

Junior doctors are especially anxious to preserve the clinical academic sector because they rely on good quality staff for their training and research, which are essential for the whole of their career progression. I hope that the Secretary of State will be willing to make a statement now about that.

From time to time we hear parrot cries about excessive expenditure on research and development compared with other countries, combined with complaints about inadequate return in the practical application of the results of the work in industry. That can only be true—if it ever was true—in the overall sense, and if military research and development expenditure is included. The proportion of research and development throughout industry, the universities, the polytechnics and, last but not least, the Government's research stations and laboratories, which are now sadly emasculated and reduced in substance and morale, is less than half of the total resource allocation for research and development. More than half of the total, some £2,400 million, is spent on military research and development with guaranteed profit margins to firms, and, therefore, is of doubtful efficiency. That is not good for medical and other research

in the civilian sector. That figure is twice the sum spent on average by European Community countries, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition said in his speech to the Science Policy Foundation on 9 October. Indeed, the proportion of the total spent on military research and development in West Germany is only 10 per cent. and in Japan 2 per cent. Therefore, our spending on research and development for defence is far in advance of theirs.

Expenditure on civil research and development in the United Kingdom represents not much more than 0·5 per cent. of gross domestic product. The argument that that is what we can afford in the present reduced circumstances is nonsense. One of the most important contributions of British science and governance to the administration and furtherance of science, even on a world scale, was the establishment of the Department of Science and Industrial Research with a chain of Government establishments devoted to research and development, by men and women committed to science, and independent of the academies and, for a time, even of the funding Treasury mandarins. These establishments were largely left to their own devices, and allowed to develop ties with surrounding industries because the moneys involved were not large, and their usefulness in war time, when those innovations mainly occurred, together with universities was of vital practical assistance for defence.

Problems arose when science administration became of interest to the Treasury, with the great increase in the cost of some types of theoretical and applied research. The official mind apparently could not tolerate the idea of allowing scientists whose work it did not comprehend to plan and carry out research without direction from above. Therefore, we had the disaster of Trend, which resulted in the abolition of DSIR, and of the short-lived Ministry of Science, when, in the dying years of the Home Administration, Lord Hailsham tried to breathe some sense into an organisation that had no authority or credibility left in it. The Ministry of Technology, which followed under a Labour Government, was no less disastrous, as it always must be where the rigid framework of an executive Government Department is forced in peacetime on a body of scientists and their organisation with little regard to the important matter of scientific interest or independence.

Under the Heath Government the scheme jointly concocted by a Conservative Government and a banker-scientist enabled the Treasury and its allies in the various executive Departments to control our academic and Government scientists alike. Forgotten were the saving graces of Rothschild, the 10 per cent., the warnings about scientific independence and so on. The highly publicised scientific advisers with direct access to Ministers, who were supposed to be equal in access to deputy secretaries, proved to be a sham. Today, I am sorry to say, they are no more than figureheads in their Departments, without staff, power or influence. As a result, the national physical laboratory has sunk to the level of a mere measuring instrument; staff morale at the building research establishment and road research laboratory has been steadily sinking; the fire research station has been privatised, and several others are in danger of going the same way. That is a disaster for Government science, and the Secretary of State must do something about it.

On science in schools, Professor Frazer of the university of East Anglia said in his address to the British Association recently:

> "Good teaching is not simply filling a vacuum but helping a child to develop and modify existing frames of reference. The survey by HM Inspectorate of Secondary School Science had shown there was too much highly didactic lecturing in years 4 and 5. . . . This is not what science is about . . . A different style of science teaching should be tried—the problem solving approach."

That requires a substantial increase in resources for laboratories, materials, apparatus and extremely well-trained technical staff. I have raised the matter before in the House, and make no apology for raising it again. We must take the matter on board.

How many local education authorities can afford to take on additional staff and all the other things necessary to teach science well? I suspect that only a few can do so. Professor Frazer's view was that we would not have achieved science for all in schools by the year 2000 if we continued at the present rate. That means dismal science teaching for a long time ahead.

Ill-trained teachers and inadequate and out-of-date equipment will not bring about the advance that we urgently need. The Secretary of State must accept what Lord Flowers, chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, said of the recent UGC report:

> "You cannot continue to cut University costs and expect from the Universities the results it seems to want."

We need well-trained teachers, some of whom should be high-fliers in their subject, to enthuse the young. Both the teachers and the young need well-resourced, good, up-to-date equipment for hands-on experience. That means more resources for science teaching. I hope that the Secretary of State will tell the House that he will provide and fight for them in the Cabinet.

6.38 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): I find three matters of particular interest in the Gracious Speech—civil aviation, education and shop hours. I apologise to the House if they do not all fit in with the main theme of our debate today. I am sure that colleagues understand the difficulty in catching your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let alone doing so on a particular day.

However important those matters may be, I suspect that in the coming Session what really matters for the life of the country and perhaps of the Government is how the economy is handled. Nevertheless, hon. Members will understand that a matter of obvious parochial importance to me is the Bill to regulate certain airport activities and to sort out the future of the British Airports Authority.

In connection with the Government's approval to limit expansion at Stansted, the Government gave general assurances about control of development. In the course of the legislation I shall want to see these assurances becoming more specific. I hope that the Department of Transport, having eased through a decision which obviously caused dismay to people in a large section of my constituency, will not take the attitude that anything can now go and that other perhaps palliative measures included in the White Paper on airport policy can be put on the back burner and quietly forgotten. I hope, not only that we shall see measures to ensure control of expansion at Stansted, but that the opportunities for airport development elsewhere will not be completely forgotten.

I shall have particular regard to the regulatory mechanisms and measures of compensation for my constituents who are affected by the development of Stansted airport. I hope that my concern will be reflected

[Mr. Alan Haselhurst]

not only in the Department of Transport but in the Department of the Environment. My local authorities, which wish to maintain the general nature of the area and which are given encouragement by the Government to enable them to do so, do not want to see their refusals of speculative planning applications overturned on appeal by the Department of the Environment. Some assurance from the Government on that point during the course of this Session would be welcome in the area I represent.

The Government's announced intention about London's airport system is to keep it in the same ownership, and the Bill will obviously reflect this. Once Bills are launched, we know that Governments have a tendency to defend every last phrase with tremendous rigidity, pouring scorn on all the alternatives which we unworthy mortals put forward. Whenever a major change is made in a Bill, it usually comes after a major clash of arms in Committee.

I plead with the Government to approach the Bill on the privatisation of the BAA with a large measure of flexibility. The argument on this side of the House at any rate will not be about the principle of privatising airports, but simply about how it should be done. I do not expect a Government committed to the enhancement of competition to oppose tooth and nail suggestions from this side of the House that more competition may be achieved by not preserving a monopoly in London's airport system.

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if enough people speak as strongly as he does, whatever Bill is brought forward may not get beyond the procedural motion to put it on the statute book? Perhaps, as he says, on this occasion the Government will take notice of the views of Back Benchers on both sides of the House.

Mr. Haselhurst: I certainly concur with that wish. I hope there will be an open approach by the Government, because this argument goes well beyond mere Stansted watchers. I assure the House and my own colleagues that my approach to this matter is not a sort of latter-day effort to frustrate the Government over their decision on Stansted. I am concerned with looking to the future, not to the past.

I welcome the fact that legislation will be introduced to improve the management of schools and to promote the professional effectiveness of teachers. As someone with one child in the system and two more waiting to go in, I can certainly say hurrah to that.

I should like to offer a word of caution to my right hon. Friend on the subject of governing bodies. There is not one simple situation which we should have fixed in our mind's eye. We are acutely and rightly conscious of local education authorities which exercise what we may regard as an improper degree of influence. It is not wholly satisfactory to swing totally in the other direction and assume that parents as governors are necessarily the fount of all wisdom. Difficulties are already being illustrated. Even now, while we are implementing the effects of the 1980 Act, it is apparent that many parental governors do not feel that they have the qualifications to undertake the task. Many — although perhaps they will not readily admit this — may well have local prejudices which can be as disadvantageous to a school as prejudices from another quarter. We should not automatically regard parents as a better source of governors, certainly not without a proper degree of training for the task.

Teacher appraisal must come if we are to have a truly professional body of teachers. I pray that we do not damn it even further in the eyes of teachers by legislating for it. My appeal to teachers is, "For heaven's sake negotiate on this question." The Government are not trying to say that there is a perfect system which must be imposed. They are willing to listen to anything said to them by the teachers, but the teachers are not talking about it.

We always listen with respect to the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand), but I was disappointed to hear him talk in terms of warnings and fears on this subject. I say to teachers that there is nothing to fear but fear itself; their own fear, which they undoubtedly have. I hope that they will overcome that and realise that we want to approach this on a totally open and objective basis.

The subject of Sunday trading is far removed and may seem trivial compared to the importance of education. I welcome the decision to bring in a Bill to remove statutory restrictions on shop opening hours. I am under no illusion. I know that strong feelings attend this subject, and they are held by our constituents and by hon. Members. I know also that a number of my hon. Friends are concerned about what they feel is the different nature of Sunday and about how one protects its special quality. My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) gave an example of that in his opening remarks. This is a hard argument for the Government to face because it is abstract and depends on best guesses about what might happen if restrictions are removed.

I hope that our debates will be informed by a clear appreciation by all hon. Members of what is actually happening on Sundays, and not by what people believe might be happening or feel ought to be happening. People are out of their homes and on the roads and about the countryside in their millions, and depend on countless numbers of their fellow citizens being in employment on Sundays in order to fulfil their purposes when they go out. Such people often go out in a family unit, keeping the family unit together and going out as a family to enjoy some activity or pursuit. This situation has come about under the current state of the law, and it is by the will of the people. Whatever one thinks about it, I doubt whether this trend will diminish in the period ahead.

I shall approach the debates on this subject looking for the answers to questions such as: why should a person be able to buy sweets on Sunday from a petrol filling station, while it is a criminal offence for a professional confectioner to open his doors to sell them? In an age of increasing leisure, when we are all being urged to discover Britain and to try to put increased emphasis on tourism, can we distinguish a holiday area where shops may open on a Sunday from a non-holiday area where they may not? In the days of modern retailing, how is it possible to maintain any credible distinction between goods that can be sold and goods that cannot be sold? They are probably nestling side by side on the shelves of the shop or supermarket. Sunday will not be spoiled by changes in the law. The day will continue to evolve. It will be different, but people have already demonstrated that they want it to be different in their way and not in a way that is imagined by some hon. Members.

These matters are important, but their importance is diminished by the matter of unemployment, and the

Government's success in handling this problem will be the basis upon which the Session will be judged. We are all haunted by the scale of unemployment and wonder how it can best be overcome. It seems that these ghosts now haunt Ministers every bit as much as they haunt the rest of us. I welcome the signs now becoming apparent that greater priority will be given to the creation of jobs. I accept the need for a certain rigidity on the part of the Government when they come to deal with such matters as unit labour costs, wage settlements and inflation, because all these things must approximate to what is happening in our competitor countries. Rigidity is perhaps less welcome in the insistence, even when the Government have created room for manoeuvre, that there is only one way, tax cuts, to boost the economy. Most employers would say demand is important as well. The Government now have scope to back both horses.

The Government say in the Gracious Speech that they "will do all in their power to encourage the growth of new jobs." Therefore, one can back more than one horse. If the Government do not want to back another horse, they do not need to shoot it to prove the point. Let us have an open discussion about how we may achieve the objective which is of concern to us all. The Government, by adopting a more pluralist approach, could widen their appeal and carry with them in their important tasks a broader section of our people.

6.50 pm

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): I want to spend most of my time discussing the care of the frail elderly, whose numbers are alarmingly high in our society.

I shall start with a few statistics, not my own, but drawn from official sources. For example, 16 per cent. of the population in Britain is now over 65. It is the convention of the House to declare an interest, and I shall be a part of that statistic by next Sunday.

Mr. Favell: God willing.

Mr. Carter-Jones: God willing, and given a fair wind.

It is estimated that those over 75 years of age will increase in number by 25 per cent. by the end of the century. In addition, 70 per cent. of the physically disabled are elderly. There is a passing reference to it in the Gracious Speech but not much else. The 70 per cent. who are disabled, who are elderly, occupy acute and surgical beds in hospitals. That is not a consequence of the physical, medical or geriatric aspect; it floods the whole of our hospital system. We have a flood of elderly people in need of help.

It might be helpful to throw some money at the problem, but the people to whom I am referring are in need of services. I am speaking about rehabilitation services. I am speaking about something which is technically possible, economically sound and morally right. I have often referred to it in this House. If the Social Services Ministers were to address the problem carefully, they could save themselves substantial sums of money and do themselves a favour.

I have no doubt that there are hon. Members present who have from time to time, in conducting their political surgeries, met people aged from 60 to 65 with arthritis, with heart disease, who are caring for their aged parents and say that they can carry on no longer. That is a feature of today.

It is estimated that, because of demographic trends, in Manchester an additional 14 per cent. of geriatric beds will be required if services are to remain as they are today. But the statistic that worries me most is that word has gone out from the DHSS that the number of beds per thousand for geriatric patients has to be cut from 10 to 8·5. How can that cut of 15 per cent. be achieved without causing suffering and hardship? Why is there no reference to it in the Gracious Speech?

One of the worst crimes that a politician can commit, on being given the facts, is to look at that which is predictable and then run away. Initially, it may cost vast sums of money to deal with the problem, but in the meantime the meals-on-wheels services, which could have assisted, have been reduced. The number of people available as home helps has been cut. On the admission of the DHSS, the number of homes available to accept geriatric people has been reduced. There is a dramatic worsening of the situation at a time when the size of the problem is increasing.

We are hypocritical if we fail to accept our responsibilities. My statistics are accurate. They are from the horse's mouth—the DHSS itself. I reiterate that the provision of geriatric beds is to be cut from 10 to 8·5 per thousand, and that in Manchester the demand will increase by 14 per cent. over the next 15 years.

Will the Secretary of State for Education and Science please look at the pay structure of clinicians who also lecture? In this field a tremendous amount of work could be done, as I shall try to demonstrate. There is little doubt that, in the rehabilitation of the elderly, skills and knowledge have advanced dramatically. I had the great honour to open a rehabilitation unit for the elderly at Ladywell in my constituency. It was a rewarding experience, but it touches only the fringe of the problem.

It is intriguing to speak to the House on a subject which is very rarely discussed and to find a responding chord from each hon. Member. My assumption is, of course, that each hon. Member in the Chamber today has conducted his or her own surgery, and knows the nature of the problem and what we shall have to face in the not too distant future.

The official definition of rehabilitation is the restoration of the individual to his or her fullest physical, mental and social ability. That definition has its limitations, in that not many of us have reached our fullest physical, mental and social ability. Nevertheless, the definition emphasises the importance of treating the whole person within the overall environment.

Another important definition is that rehabilitation is the planned withdrawal of support. In other words, at the time of need, the disabled, the elderly and the frail elderly are given maximum support, advice and guidance so that ultimately that support can be withdrawn and they can go back into the community and lead a full life. That presupposes other problems. Rehabilitation does not fit easily into the nursing and medical model of doing things to or for a patient. It is an educational model; training a person to do things for himself or herself. Such rehabilitation requires a team that understands that approach and can work together.

Rehabilitation starts the instant the person goes into hospital. It may be that it is the surgeon, or a specialist, who has to do the work, but the individual skills required must include a readiness to recognise instantly the importance of rehabilitation so that the decline of the

[Mr. Carter-Jones]

elderly person does not accelerate. One is guiding such people to recovery instantly and sustaining their will to be independent.

Unless schemes of rehabilitation, such as the ones I have described for the elderly, are successfully implemented, our society—I choose my words carefully—will be swamped by hundreds of thousands of uncared for, frail, elderly people. Hundreds of thousands is no exaggeration, because all too many of them are tucked away unsung, unseen and neglected and only occasionally, through a good neighbour, a caring doctor or a caring elderly relative, are they brought to our attention. Even then, we sometimes fail to tackle the problem. We deserve to be condemned as uncivilised unless we tackle the problem with vigour, determination and a true sense of priority. Rehabilitation is more than physiotherapy and occupational therapy: it is a package deal of both the community and hospital teams, which communicate well and work towards common goals.

It is pointless if the rehabilitation programme simply makes a person fit to be lonely. Similarly, there is no point in improving the physical ability of an elderly person if he does not use the skills that he has acquired when he returns home. We talk much about community care. There is a danger of it becoming community neglect unless health and social services departments work closely together and are prepared to provide the appropriate resources.

Members of Parliament are privileged people. We have the chance to vote the funds for adequate rehabilitation. One could argue lighthearted ly that I am pleading enlightened self-interest, but I have been making this plea for many years in the House. For the rehabilitation programme to have a long-term effect, there must be good community support from both the statutory and voluntary sections in our community. It is for the Department to harness both the NHS and the local authorities as well as the volunteers. I hope that during debate on the Queen's Speech those elements will be developed.

7.4 pm

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): It gives me great pleasure to speak after the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones). On behalf of other right hon. and hon. Members, I should like to wish him a happy birthday this coming weekend and a long and happy retirement.

I was glad to learn from the Gracious Speech that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was not for turning. I was equally glad to hear that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services is not for turning.

Lord Wilson of Rievaulx said in his book "A Prime Minister on Prime Ministers" that the writing was on the wall for a Government when they resorted to the policies of their opponents. How right he was. Unfortunately, when he introduced "In Place of Strife" he did not realise that the Labour party should not try to cut off its left arm. Unfortunately, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) did not realise that it was no way to run a Conservative Government to resort to state controls on spending and incomes, having printed too much money.

The Father of the House was a little more unfortunate. When he finally learnt that the present Prime Minister, then the Leader of the Opposition, was right when she said that public expenditure had to be controlled, his conversion took place with the gun of the International Monetary Fund to his head. His head rolled at the hands of the electorate soon afterwards.

It is crystal clear from the Gracious Speech that the Government have no intention of resorting to the policies of the Opposition. The Government still have the utmost confidence in the convictions upon which they were elected.

What of the Leader of the Opposition? Does he have the conviction that Socialism is the answer to the nation's problems? If so, why did he not use his speech last Wednesday to put the case for more state housing, more nationalisation and more trade union powers, because, after all, those are the policies that the electorate associates with Socialism? I shall tell hon. Members why. It is that he dared not. Since the Government came to power, people have grown to enjoy buying their council homes, taking a financial interest in their privatised firms and exercising their democratic rights at work. They have tasted freedom and it has set their taste buds tingling.

The Opposition are frightened to death because they know that Socialism grows out of dependence, not independence. That is why they have launched their attack on the plans of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to reform the social security system. I have a copy of the briefing notes that the Department has supplied, and very good they are too. They are good reading, and I recommend them to all hon. Members. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State lists three main aims of the scheme. The notes state:

"The proposals are designed to ensure that:

i. limited resources are directed at the areas of greatest need".

What on earth is wrong with that? Surely that is everybody's aim. What is the complaint about directing resources to those who really need them? Is there any sense in housing benefit being payable to almost 40 per cent. of householders, of whom almost 4 million are not eligible for supplementary benefit, and many of whom are paying tax?

Secondly, the proposals are designed to ensure that

"the rules are made easier to understand and administer".

Again, that is a praiseworthy objective. Is there any sense in a family on family income supplement having to go cap in hand for free glasses, milk tokens and free vitamins for expectant mothers and children under school age, refunds of fares to hospital for treatment as well as free school meals? How much better it would be to leave them to run their lives. However, that is not what the Opposition want. They want dependence, not independence. Many of them think that they have a divine right to run other people's lives. Such is the conceit of Socialism.

7.10 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): How nice it would be if, as the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) suggested is necessary, we could always give help where it is needed. However, it is not like that. That is why the Opposition are fighting for something similar to what he suggested.

The debate on the Queen's Speech is rather sporadic because there are so many important subjects, but the guidelines have laid down two for today. I shall deal mainly with education, but the nine words about social security are interesting:

"A Bill will be introduced to reform social security."

I listened carefully to the Secretary of State for Social Services this afternoon. It would be better if we said that a Bill will be introduced to deform social security, because the meaning of the word "reform" is to make better. But we all know that the cuts are horrific and that resources do not meet needs. When my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) spoke about the frail elderly, he highlighted a vital issue to which the Government pay insufficient attention.

My hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand) rightly said that education is not in chaos but is in a deep crisis. It is in crisis because the teacher has been undervalued, the status and dignity of teachers have been demeaned and their salaries are so pitifully low that they do not know how they can carry on. When the Government talk about balance, Mr. Deputy Teacher—*[Laughter.]* My right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, Central (Mr. Walker) was a teacher. He is an old friend and I am sure he will forgive me.

The teachers believe themselves to be in a crisis. When the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) says that ACAS would help, he does not understand. Despite what anybody has said, the Secretary of State has flatly refused to give more money. Therefore, although the Government say that the teachers will not go to arbitration—until recently, the Government of the day and the teachers abided by the outcome of that arbitration—the truth is that the Government will not stand by what the arbitrators say. The Government have limited the pay increase to 3 per cent., so there is no point in going to arbitration or ACAS. The rate support grant will only allow for that increase. There is no more money on the table, and this argument will go on.

The Government love unions to have ballots. The NUT, for instance, has had 10 ballots, all with overwhelming results. One is being conducted now. Teachers have made it clear that, unless more money its put on the table, they will continue to struggle.

As a member of the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts I have visited West Germany to study primary schools. West German teachers, in a society not dissimilar from ours in terms of its standards of living, get twice as much pay as their British counterparts. The Secretary of State may shake his head, but I have been there and met teachers. They also have half the numbers in the classes. I saw no class with more than 20 pupils and most had fewer.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): I do not quarrel with the hon. Gentleman about teachers' pay in West Germany; I quarrel with his comment that the West German standard of living is about the same as ours. Their prosperity and their productivity, which leads to prosperity, is greater than ours. Therefore, the pay in every sector of German society is substantially above British pay.

Mr. Flannery: The Secretary of State and I will always differ, but the reality is that there are far more unemployed teachers in West Germany than there are in Britain.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science is the most unpopular incumbent of that post in my lifetime. Everywhere he goes, he antagonises teachers with his complete lack of understanding of their conditions of service and miserable pay. He knows as well as I do that, since 1974, the Houghton pay award given by the Labour Government, with the agreement of the Tory party, has been eroded almost completely.

I shall give the House some statistics. In 1974, a teacher's average weekly wage was £59·58, whereas the average wage of a non-manual worker was £43·50. By 1984, under this Government, teachers were earning £129·05, whereas the average non-manual worker was earning £130·81. In 1974, accountants earned on average 12p a week more than did teachers, but by 1984 they were earning on average £45 a week more than teachers. In 1974, computer programmers earned less than teachers; by 1984, they were earning £51 a week more than teachers.

Left to themselves, local authorities would end this long and terrible struggle—the longest industrial action ever undertaken by the teachers. But the Government will not allow them to end it. They have no money to give the teachers more than the 3 per cent. to which the Minister has stuck, but which is less than the rate of inflation. He and his Government are causing great problems in our schools, which will continue unless the teachers are given more money.

A recent report from the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations shows that 72 per cent. of primary schools have classes of mixed age pupils larger than the Government's guideline of 26, and 40 per cent. of schools have entirely lost some subjects from their curricula—music is the most common example. The report also states that 82 per cent. of secondary schools require their pupils to share textbooks and 58 per cent. of them require parents to purchase essential learning materials.

I visited many south-east primary schools with the Select Committee. When I told the Secretary of State that those schools had between two and three times the capitation allowance of schools in areas with high unemployment, all that he could tell the Select Committee was, "Let the local education authority make it up." How can the local authorities make it up when the rate support grant has been cut and they have no more money?

I also visited the best preparatory school in Britain—Summerfields in Oxford—where I met many children from rich and powerful families who had everything that they needed and whose teachers earned high wages. Although I taught for many years, I have never visited such a well-equipped school. Yet a moderate section of the community which wants the best for our children and does not want to strike must continue to struggle because the Government have placed it in such a difficult position.

In the meantime, what is happening to large amounts of public money? While our state schools are being cut to the bone and many of them have gone without decoration for more than 20 years, the assisted places scheme is siphoning off our money into the private education system, which has been well shored up at the expense of ordinary children.

A policeman needs only three months' training before he can don a uniform and is judged able to handle the subtle and complicated problems of racism and urban renewal, yet a policeman, who has low qualifications, gets a higher wage than a four-year trained teacher who is highly qualified. A corporal in the Army receives more money than a scale 3 teacher who is well qualified and has

[Mr. Flannery]

many years of experience. What kind of an attitude are the Government taking to allow such a situation to exist? Most people do not know what is happening.

The teachers are angry and massively united in their longest and most determined struggle. It is not the teachers but the Government and the most unpopular Secretary of State for Education and Science who have allowed this state of affairs to arise. I appeal to the Minister to give the teachers more money and so get them back to teaching. The teachers desire to teach children, but millions of our children are suffering. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) should take the smile off his face because what I am saying is not funny. I am telling the truth about what is happening to our children at the hands of the Government. It is a serious situation and it is time something was done to remedy it. If the Government had decided to give money to the teachers instead of deciding overnight to give a quarter of a billion pounds to Johnson Matthey without consulting the House, this problem would have been solved.

Sir Keith Joseph: I want to make it clear that I certainly was not smiling. I am very sad to hear the hon. Member repeating the same errors time and time again. Mixed up with his errors are some truths. I only wish I could convey to him some of the errors he is making, though I acknowledge some of the grievance that he reflects.

Mr. Flannery: I am glad that the Secretary of State acknowledges some of my grievances. When he replies I hope that he will deal with what he says are errors in my speech. There are no errors in what I have said. I have spoken from a proper brief which has been researched.

Conservative Members constantly say that teachers are against reassessment, but that is wholly untrue. The Minister knows as well as I that the teachers have said that they are ready to discuss reassessment with the Government but that reassessment should not be tied to this year's wage demand. The demand should be settled first and then reassessment may be discussed. To tie reassessment in with this year's wage demand after all these years is a ploy not to pay the teachers their just earnings.

If nothing emerges from a debate such as this, the struggle will continue. Everyone who has listened to this debate or who reads it in the papers will know whom to blame for the children not being in school. The teachers want to teach the children and they want dignity and status. They are sick to death of being undervalued. It lies in the Government's hands, and particularly with the Secretary of State, to get the teachers back into the schools and so educate our children properly.

7.18 pm

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in the debate on the Gracious Speech and to follow the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery). I am bound to tell the hon. Member that I have recently researched some private schools and have been told by their headmasters that their problems stem from people like myself who are first-generation parents, who went through the state sector, because our expectations are much higher than those of people who have been used to public schools. I found the conditions in private schools poor in superficial terms—if the hon. Member for Hillsborough was referring to physical buildings and equipment—in comparison with what one sees in the state sector. One of the oddities of the education debate, especially the argument of Opposition Members, is the obsession with inputs in education while far too little attention is paid to what comes out at the other end.

I welcome the Gracious Speech because it is a continuation of the radical strategy adopted by the Government since they were elected in 1979. I wish that the recognition of the failure of state provision in the industrial and commercial areas of life could be carried over. If one thing is certain it is the victory that the Government have achieved in transferring industries that were once in the state sector into the private sector. The Government have not done this because it raises money for the Treasury but because the changeover has resulted in more efficient companies, which are more responsive to the needs of the consumer and are able to compete more efficiently overseas.

In the industrial areas of our land, the strategy of privatisation has broken the mould — I choose that phrase for the benefit of the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy)—of stagnation and decline and put us on the road towards a modernised economy and the transformation of a society dependent on the industries of yesterday into one able to face the challenges of tomorrow. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science will embrace the same strategy in his attitude to education. The success of privatisation has come partly from increased competition—in some cases one would have liked to see more of that—but also from the discipline of increased accountability to shareholders and customers. The debate about our schools is far too much dominated by what suits the producers—the teachers and administrators—rather than by what suits the parents. It is astonishing that, although children spend seven hours a day for 11 or 12 years of their lives in the hands of our teachers, we have very few measures of what actually results from that input.

The trade unions and the teachers tell us that standards in our schools have improved except during periods of Government economies. We are told that total spending on teachers, schools and textbooks has risen and that class sizes have decreased. The hon. Member for Hillsborough should consider why textbooks have to be shared in some schools. It is because the education authorities have made it their priority to look after the producers rather than the children and have allocated their resources accordingly. The hon. Gentleman shakes his head and complains about cuts in rate support grant, but the education authorities which take that attitude manage to find hundreds of thousands of pounds for political advertising campaigns, putting leaflets through letterboxes, and so on.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the inflation rate for books is almost double the general inflation rate and that that has caused acute problems? Moreover, the many worthwhile curriculum changes that we have sought mean that many books become out of date before they are worn out. It is thus a major problem for schools to obtain up-to-date textbooks. The hon. Gentleman should not blame the teachers. He should address himself to the real problem of the price of books and the need to keep them up to date.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point, but per capita expenditure in real terms has increased by 17 per cent. in primary schools and 12 per cent. in secondary schools. Within that framework it should be possible to find resources for books. Cuts are made in sensitive areas to put pressure on parents and to grab headlines. That is irresponsible. It is a feature of local authorities playing politics.

The main question is what can be done for the vast majority of people who cannot afford to pay twice for education—first through taxation and then by going to the private sector—and who are stuck with what is on offer in the state sector. Some may be able to move to a better area, and so on, but many have no choice whatever in education. Although there have been some measures in the right direction, there is still very little choice and very little political control for many people in this country. We should be moving towards a system in which headmasters have more control in their schools and in which chief executives can decide policy and resources and perhaps even pay and conditions in their own schools.

Why do we have to argue these matters in the House and outside? Why cannot headmasters be directly responsible to boards of management, with real teeth and power, in schools where parents have a real role to play? Only in that way shall we have schools that reflect the needs of parents.

Mr. Patrick Thompson *rose*—

Dr. Michael Clark *rose*—

Mr. Forsyth: I should like to give way, but I am up against time.

If schools were financed on a per capita sum basis, so that those that attracted more pupils got more resources, we should begin to have a system that allows parental pressure and teacher merit to secure continuous improvement.

The problem of producer capture — when schools satisfy the needs of teachers rather than pupils—is also apparent in the university sector. The method of funding through the UGC means that students' choices have no bearing on the system. Instead, there is a bureaucratic body. The UGC horse trades, scratches backs and decides which departments will go, which will stay, which universities will prosper and which will do badly. Stirling university is losing by 25 per cent. in one year even when it is inundated by students of a high standard wishing to go there. If the universities and their departments were funded on a per capita basis and those able to attract students of the required standard were given resources, we would move towards some market sensitivity to the demands of students. That is part of the Government's declared aim of allowing competition and encouraging success.

We should also consider the assisted places scheme, which has great merit but is blighted because it applies only at secondary level. Effectively, that means that those who go through the state sector and not through prep schools are disadvantaged. There is scope to increase the number of assisted places.

I do not believe that there are adverse political implications in all this. We are told by those described as consolidators that we must not do anything too radical to upset the electorate, but I believe that extending choice in education would be a popular policy. It would not be popular with the disgruntled ideologues who have education in their grip and would resent the fact that people had a choice, because they believe that they know better. There is an overwhelming desire in Britain for an education system built on the cornerstone of consumer choice.

If the current dispute tells us anything, it is that state provision, under which parents are effectively excluded as consumers, has failed badly and is in urgent need of radical and major reform.

7.32 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I shall not follow entirely the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who concentrated on education. However, I believe that there is hope for him, because he is interested in breaking a few moulds.

There is a feeling in Scotland that the difficulties faced by the Secretary of State for Education and Science south of the border limit the room for manoeuvre by the Secretary of State for Scotland towards some form of settlement. Prior to the further damage that is bound to be inflicted on the education system north of the border next year, I hope that it will prove possible for the Government either to recognise the right of teachers to an independent review or to follow the approach which the alliance has recommended for several months, which is to allow the Scottish joint negotiating committee to call in its own form of independent consultation. That body could give advice, which would not be binding on either party, on possible ways of ending the dispute. Everyone in Scotland agrees that the current position is intolerable and that immense damage is being caused. The Government and the Scottish Office bear the major burden of responsiblity and blame because of the the way in which they have handled the dispute.

I agreed with the Secretary of State when he said that economic policy could not be separated from social policy. He is right, and that was why I was filled with gloom when I saw in the Queen's Speech the apparent conviction that economic policy will not change. If it does not change, there will be little hope that the social policy can be substantially improved.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that what he is saying applies equally to what the Secretary of State said about the problems of the NHS?

Mr. Kennedy: Yes. I know of the hon. Gentleman's long interest in these matters and I am sure that he agrees that it is important that — perhaps at Question Time tomorrow — Ministers should confirm what the extra cash that we read is being given to the NHS amounts to and whether it matches the £250 million that I understand the Royal College of Nursing, the British Medical Association and the Institute of Health Service Administrators have identified as an absolute minimum. That may have been what the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) was getting at.

There is little doubt that the Government's economic policies will not create the conditions that will enable the proposed reforms of the social security system to be acceptable across the political spectrum. I found the lack of further detail in the Secretary of State's speech about his plans for SERPS astonishing. I expected him to begin

[Mr. Kennedy]

to spell out in more detail what he intends to do, because he seems to have backed off from his original position of outright abolition.

The Secretary of State talks with great confidence about the future of the pensions industry, but within the past week the *Financial Times* reported that Mr. Brian Coote, the president of the Society of Pension Consultants, speaking at a dinner at which the Secretary of State also spoke,

"attacked the Government for failing to seek political consensus on plans to overhaul the pensions system.

This failure, he claimed, had re-introduced uncertainty which made long-term planning for effective retirement provision an impossibility."

It is interesting to set that statement alongside the nonsense that the Secretary of State produced today. It is not valid to argue, as the right hon. Gentleman attempted to argue, that the Government have achieved a consensus in the industry and that they are satisfying the demands of consumers. The Company Pensions Information Centre said earlier this year that preserving consensus about future pension policy is more important than preserving SERPS. That is right.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) referred to a recent speech by my noble Friend Lord Banks about the alliance view of the future of SERPS. We think that if there is to be some restructuring or modification of SERPS, as opposed to its abolition, the Government should seek to get the all-party consensus which does not exist at present, and to take the industry with them. The hon. Member for Oldham, West dug his pensions grave even deeper today by promising that, even if the industry backed any restructuring, a future Labour Government would tear up the plan and revert to a system which alliance Members acknowledge is not redistributive enough and is not targeted at those in most need.

The lessons of the review so far suggest that there is sufficient goodwill and sufficient realisation of the political necessity for a consensus for the Secretary of State to achieve it. If he does not seek that, the alliance would prefer a restructuring of SERPS, reducing some of the longer-term costs and using savings that could be made by that restructuring for the lower paid.

These matters were discussed in detail in a debate earlier in the year by my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). That money could then be ploughed into a short-term immediate increase of 20 to 25 per cent. The Government Actuary's figures show that that could be brought about. That is our preferred option, though it cannot be for any party the ultimate option if the Government are willing to give on the issue, and I hope that they will give.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Antony Newton) *rose*——

Mr. Kennedy: I gather that the Minister has received an SOS message. I had better give way, therefore.

Mr. Newton: Whatever message I may have received, it has nothing to do with what I am about to ask the hon. Gentleman. I want to be clear about what he is saying, because much depends on what he means by "short-term." The only way in which short-term resources could be made available from SERPS would be by cutting the pensions of people who are already receiving SERPS pensions. Is that the policy of the alliance?

Mr. Kennedy: The Minister will appreciate that that is not the policy of the alliance. Perhaps I was wrong to use the word "short-term," and I will clarify the position.

Our preferred option throughout has been that the savings that would accrue from changing the current system of SERPS — a system which we have acknowledged has long-term implications, and we are not satisfied that it is sufficiently egalitarian or redistributive for the poorest in society—could be ploughed back into the basic pension, releasing funds for an immediate increase of 20 to 25 per cent.

While that may be our preferred option, all political parties, including the Conservative party, should be willing, for the sake of achieving consensus and therefore political continuity in future pensions policy — that aspect is particularly worrying to the pensions industry —to seek agreement with other parties, whereas so far they have not been willing to do so.

The reports of which we read last week, and about which the Secretary of State was vague and disappointingly woolly today, give rise to the view that there is a state of chaos at the Elephant and Castle over how the social security reviews will be implemented. That is greatly to do with the fact that they have been carried out in an unbelievable fashion. They have been produced without any indicative figures, and there is fear that the Government may rush into legislation without having thoroughly considered the implications of its implementation.

That is why we have expressed concern at the fact that there is no commitment to extend the long-term rate of supplementary benefit for the long-term unemployed; at the fact that child benefit has been frozen, when all the indicators suggest that it should be increased in real terms; and at the fact that the rating system, which the Government admit is unacceptable, is neverless considered good enough to enable more people to contribute towards such a system. That is all happening at a time when we should be moving towards an integrated tax and benefits system which would allow basic benefits, with additional payments to recipients, so that their needs may be met in a more humane way than, I suspect, the social fund — about which the Secretary of State has been talking, but about the size of the budget of which we have no clue—is liable to do.

For the Department of Health and Social Security, the Queen's Speech must be a disappointment, because the reviews remain clouded in doubt. As the ministerial team at that Department has changed, and as we have two new Health Ministers, it is difficult to know whether to be relieved or despondent at there being no mention of the National Health Service. Given that there may be additional resources — we should be told exactly how much they will be — let us hope that the Government have decided, as they are in the bunkers of social security reform, for once to leave the NHS alone and allow it to come to grips slowly with the implications of the Griffiths report and the new general management structure. If they are willing to do that, then, from the point of view of the NHS, they will have my support.

7.45 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I hope that it is in order for me to call attention to an important matter that is missing from the Queen's Speech — the whole complex of issues covered by the Warnock report.

That report called for urgent legislation, and hon. Members will have received large postbags on the issues that it covered. Ministers have said that they wish to introduce legislation as soon as practicable. I gather that the Government are in a consultative stage, studying the public response to the Warnock report. There is a danger, however, that during this neutral stance, a private Member will bring in legislation, as happened last year when the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) jumped the consultative phase by attempting to bring in his own Bill.

What will the Government do this year if there is introduced another private Member's Bill similar to that introduced last year? Will they try to rely on another by-election writ to save the day?

The Bill which the right hon. Member for South Down introduced I believe flew in the face of public opinion. Public opinion polls carried out earlier this year showed a clear majority in favour of allowing research, if it helped to eliminate genetic diseases. There was a 51 per cent. majority in the Marplan poll in April and a 63 per cent. majority in a further Marplan poll in May. *Woman* magazine, from 3,000 responses, had an 80 per cent. majority in favour of allowing such research. The Labour party annual conference passed a resolution by a majority of 90 per cent. deploring the action of the 44 hon. Members who voted in support of that private Member's Bill.

The Warnock report unfortunately said little about the potential benefits of research, and I am sure that the good lady whose name the report bears would have said more had she been aware of some of the doubts that were to be expressed later. I strongly recommend the Government to set up within the Department of Health and Social Security a working party of experts to examine the potential benefits from such research, for it is in that area that the public are anxious to see benefits gained, if research is to be allowed.

Meantime, the Minister must vigorously oppose any attempts to bring in private legislation before the Government have had time to consider the recommendations of the working party. I am sure that the public would welcome a positive move of that type by the Government. Indeed, the public have shown their anxieties already in two respects, particularly in respect of handicapped children.

In Britain, 10,000 children are born each year with obvious genetic problems. Throughout the world, 4 million such children are born each year. It is reported that there are 185,000 handicapped children in our schools and that there are 60,000 severely handicapped children in the United Kingdom. About 20,000 children are in care, more than 3,000 of them in institutions. Fostering and adoptive homes are desperately needed for those children. It is a crying shame that children should be left in institutional care.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if the Government established a scheme by which special aid was given to people prepared to foster particularly the mentally handicapped and retarded, we could give the mentally handicapped and the retarded a better life than could be given to them in institutions?

Mr. Thurnham: I would support any measures which encouraged people to provide homes. Such children are more in need of love and care than ordinary children and it is a crying shame that so many of them should be in institutions.

When the right hon. Member for South Down introduced his Bill, he referred to the dignity of man. I ask where the dignity is for such children in institutions. I challenge those who oppose research to provide the names of people willing to foster and adopt such children. They are keen for others to do the caring; they are not so keen to do it themselves.

I refer hon. Members to an article written by Madeleine Simms, in the *Lancet* for 2 November this year, in which she refers to a survey of mothers of mentally handicapped young adults, two thirds of whom said that they did not consider that looking after their children was time well spent and with hindsight they wish that they had had an abortion. How can we refuse to allow research that would help to reduce the incidence of such grievous affliction and handicaps?

In addition to that, the public are concerned about the problems of infertile couples. At least one couple in 10 has difficulty in conceiving, and in the North-West health authority in my constituency there are four-year waiting lists for in vitro fertilisation treatment. When patients finally get the treatment, their chance of a successful pregnancy is no better than 10 per cent. Although techniques have been developed to allow the freezing and storing of both semen and fertilised eggs, there is no technique for storing unfertilised eggs, and research is desperately needed on that.

The Roman Catholic church has doubts about this issue, and I draw attention to a book written by Friar John Mahoney, who has recently been elected the first president of the Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain. In it, he casts great doubt on the position taken by those who feel that no research should be allowed. He draws attention in his book, which is entitled "Bio-ethics and Belief", to three objections to the theory that an embryo is so sacred that no research on it can be allowed.

Firstly, the article points out that 30 per cent. of embryos die naturally before implanting in the mother's womb, without allowing for the numbers lost through contraception. Second, an embryo in its first stages has no brain and can hardly be considered to have a soul. Third, he draws attention to a problem to which, as far as I know, no answer has been put forward. It is that, in the very early stages, an embryo can divide to form twins and then come together again to recombine. It is difficult to imagine that an embryo can be considered as an individual when it is capable of doing that.

I shall quote two passages from Friar John Mahoney's book. On page 64 he argues:

> "The time of implantation should be considered as the critical stage."

On page 97 he says about the embryos, to which he refers as "nodes":

> "The destruction of such biologically human 'nodes' does not entail the destruction of a human person."

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I know that my hon. Friend does not intend to mislead the House.

[Mr. J. F. Pawsey]

I acknowledge immediately the sincerity with which he speaks, and I understand his particular circumstances. However, will he confirm that the Catholic bishops remain opposed to experimentation on the human embryo?

Mr. Thurnham: It is for that reason that I have drawn the attention of hon. Members to the book written by Friar John Mahoney, who is a leading Catholic theologian. As the Catholic Church has such grave doubts, it would be inexcusable for a minority group to try to impose restrictive legislation.

The Medical Research Council and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists have set up a voluntary licensing authority and I ask the Government to examine its work to see to what extent it applies to the recommendation of the Warnock committee, which called urgently for the setting up of a statutory licensing authority.

We owe it to those who are most handicapped to do nothing that will limit the chances for improvement in this sector, where great love and care is needed and where action by the Government is so necessary.

7.54 pm

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): I regret that I shall not follow the points made by the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham). He made a first-class speech, on which I congratulate him. I hope that some of the facts and figures that he has given will receive a much wider publication than is usual with speeches made in the Chamber at this time of night. He has a genuine approach to these problems, and I, as a previous member of the Medical Research Council, cannot fault him in any way. I regret only that time does not permit me to amplify the expert case that he made. I hope that it will be read by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

It will not surprise you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to learn that I intend to speak mainly about a great omission from the Queen's Speech. This will be the 27th contribution that I have made to debates on Gracious Speeches since I first came to the House. In the year that I came to the House, I was the first new Member to make a maiden speech and I chose to speak about the NHS. Like the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), I am appalled by the fact that a £2 billion public spending Department, affecting every citizen, has received no mention in the Gracious Speech for the first time in my 27 years' experience.

I ought not to be surprised that the NHS has not been mentioned, because, in spite of the Government's protestations that the NHS is safe in the Prime Minister's hands, we have witnessed the amputation, limb by limb, of hospital specialties, to the extent that there is now a five-year plan for the complete closure of general hospitals, with the intention of changing them into old folks homes or geriatric hospitals. The Government should have said something in the Gracious Speech about their record and their future plans for the NHS.

My second charge is that the NHS has been facing starvation by cuts in resources—a malnutrition diet that has led to less patient care. It is a tragedy that it is leading also to the erosion of the morale of dedicated nurses, doctors, Health Service workers and all the 1 million people who are employed in the Health Service. I regret that the Minister for Health is not here, although I welcome the Minister for Social Security, because he has always treated me and the House with courtesy. My speech will be directed at the Minister for Health, and I know that he will make sure that I get from his colleague a written answer to my specific questions.

The new Minister for Health replaces the Prime Minister's supreme statistics juggler. Never has there been a Minister so effective in selecting figures, tossing them around the Chamber and showing a bigger and better Health Service at the end, while each of us knows that instead it is smaller and inferior. Some 40 years ago, both the new Minister for Health and I, believe it or not, served on the Standing Conference of the National Voluntary Youth Organisation and were delegates to the World Assembly of Youth. Now, we are both old boys. At that time he was noted as being wet, and I hope that his new office will not dry him out.

There has been much hospital closure by stealth, and I can give two immediate cases. Hon. Members from both sides of the House fought to keep open the cardiac surgery department at our own hospital of Westminster. We fought against that closure, and I had support from the House of Lords, from the previous leader of the Liberal party, Lord Grimond, and from others. However, cardiac surgery has now finished, as has ophthalmology.

That closure came about in spite of the fact that the evidence showed that we would have been able to maintain these specialties, which affect not only the patients needing that treatment, but the feedback to radiology, pathology and all the other specialties of the ancillary professions. Will the Minister give a guarantee that when specialty department consultants retire at the Westminster hospital they will be replaced by a permanent specialty consultant, and not by an acting consultant? I say that because we lost the cardiac consultancy at Westminster when, in 1981, Mr. Drew retired and the bureaucrats decided not to make a new appointment. This is what is known as preventing the growth or development of a hospital by blight.

The most important point about this closure by stealth has been shown in my constituency. I took a strong delegation to the new Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security consisting of people from my constituency, led by the Methodist Minister. They were concerned about the closure of a ward in Neasden hospital and the delegation included a ward sister and a nurse from the hospital. Neasden is located in my area of Brent and has 83 old folks' beds. The warning shot was the closure of ward C. All the indications were that this was the beginning of the closure of the entire hospital, and within five days of meeting the Under-Secretary the district health authority, on the casting vote of the chairman, decided to close the hospital.

The Minister should now intervene to prevent this disaster, especially in view of the fact that the decision to close went ahead only on the casting vote of the chairman after the district health authority vote had tied eight to eight. He should stop this closure for three reasons. First, last year a 94-bed geriatric hospital in my constituency was closed at Leamington Park. Secondly, the elderly people affected will be transferred to Acton, Wembley and central Middlesex, and with the bus cuts that are now taking place in my constituency it will be practically impossible for their relatives to visit them. As a result, those old people

will die, not just from their geriatric problems, but from loneliness. If relatives are unable to visit them, there will be a gap in the care and attention that they require.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his kind words earlier. I shall ensure that the points that he has made are drawn to the attention of Health Ministers. So that no one is misled, I am sure he will agree that if a community health council objects to the proposed closure of a hospital, the matter will normally come higher up the ladder and arrive on a Minister's desk.

Mr. Pavitt: The community health council has objected, as has the Conservative-controlled borough council. I am therefore certain that the matter will be discussed at higher levels.

My third point affects the Home Secretary. This hospital is in the heartland of a deprived inner city area. The Stonebridge high rise blocks suffer from all the problems imaginable, and, together with the St. Raphael's estate, this area has a higher proportion of black people than in Handsworth or Brixton. The infrastructure, including the community hospital, is gradually being eroded or destroyed. This closure could also have repercussions for community relations, because if people are no longer able to visit their elderly relatives, another problem will be heaped on those that already exist.

I have read the regional and district strategy with great interest, and I have made lengthy submissions to the regional health authority on what is happening to Brent. There are three Members of Parliament serving a population of 250,000, yet the 10-year strategy means that all the major services are likely to be transferred outside my borough to either Hammersmith or Paddington, leaving Brent with a skeleton service.

The Neasden hospital occupies a key site on the north circular road. In terms of profits and asset-stripping it will be a bargain, because the property developers will be able to build a hypermarket or warehouse and make a fortune out of it. Consequently, that entire area will continue to be run down in terms of health, education and other social services.

The Government have from time to time talked about believing in patient care. This allows me to bring up a constituency case of someone who is finding difficulty in obtaining treatment. I received a letter from Euan Milroy, consultant urologist at the Middlesex hospital, one of our finest teaching hospitals. He was apologising for being unable to do his job properly, and said:

"Current Government policy has resulted in this Health Authority being asked to sustain revenue cuts which are impossible to plan and achieve in any sensible way on the required timescale. Since June this year workload reductions of the order of 30 per cent. have been imposed on our acute surgical services, including my speciality, and further cuts in operating time and medical staffing are being discussed. The service we now offer is steadily worsening; waiting times for our specialist facilities are increasing and sadly the Government's plans to reprovide such services in areas where they are more accessible to the patients are not coming to fruition".

That is not the story that we hear from the Government time and time again—that is reality.

In Brent, an under-staffed ambulance service is dealing with a 10 per cent. increase in emergency calls. A pregnant woman waited 40 minutes, and a respiratory crisis case 32 minutes, while the ambulances stood idle. We are not short of ambulances, but, because of lack of funds, we cannot employ the people to drive them. I commend to the Minister an article which I shall send to him from the *Wembley Observer*, which gives chapter and verse about the sad state of the emergency services in my area.

A health cut which nurses will deplore is that after 98 years the *Nursing Mirror* will cease to exist. The 1910 issue contained a very good article about Florence Nightingale, but sadly that publication is now finished and this journal was very popular with nurses.

The Government may massage the statistics, but the reality is that an injection of £250 million is needed to stop the rot. Over the last three years, there was an actual growth in resources of 0·2 per cent. in the first year, 0·8 per cent. in the second year and a loss of 0·1 per cent. in the third year. Those are not the statistics that come from the Government. Bowing to pressure, the Minister has stated that some of the money that was to be taken from district health authorities to meet the nurses' and doctors' pay award will be replaced by an increase from the DHSS. How much will be injected? Will it be the £250 million for which the BMA and the Royal College of Nursing are asking, or a lesser sum? May we have a definite figure?

The health of our families is an imperative part of government, yet there is not a word about it in the Gracious Speech. That is appalling. The situation is now traumatic and is developing into a disaster. We need a full day's debate on this subject — distinct from social security—at the earliest opportunity and I hope that the Leader of the House will find time so that hon. Members can pursue this subject. On health, this Goverment think only in terms of figures, statistics and cash. They lack care and compassion.

8.8 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): It is appropriate that we are debating education and social services, because if we do not have education of the relevant and appropriate standard, we shall not have the prosperity that we need to pay for social services.

I want to turn my attention to the education side of the discussion. There is a reference in the Gracious Speech to having better management of schools and a need to promote the professional effectiveness of teachers. For a time, I served as a governor in a large secondary school. Along with me there was one parent governor and one teacher governor. The rest were appointed by the county council. I often asked myself who really ran the school and who was managing it. I have no doubt that it was the head, who on almost every occasion was backed by the county council. It was difficult for governors to get their way. There were occasions when they saw the need for improvement and change, but if the head opposed it, it was difficult to force through those changes simply because the county council invariably backed the headmaster.

How can we change that? What can we do to ensure that schools are managed more effectively by those who care about them?

Governors should have more authority, but I accept that if there are no checks and balances there is a danger of extremists serving on governing bodies. If the governors had a real interest in the schools, they would not be extremists and would not adversely upset the management of the schools.

It will be more satisfactory to have additional parent governors on boards. When I served on a governing body, some of the parents wanted improvements to be made in the school. However, one governor insisted that the school

[Dr. Michael Clark]

was satisfactory and that there was no reason to recommend changes. We asked him which school his children attended, and discovered that they had been sent to a private school. He sat as a governor of a state school which he thought needed no changes, yet it was obviously not good enough for his children.

The Secretary of State has several roles in the management of schools. He must determine the criteria by which schools are managed. There is a clear need for national co-ordination to establish and maintain a degree of uniformity. Minimum standards must be upheld, and the Government have an important role in ensuring that they are lifted.

I cannot support the present assisted places scheme. Although it may be a short-term necessity, it is highly desirable that in the long term our state schools become so attractive to parents and children that there will be no need to cream off our better pupils and send them to private schools at public expense. I deplore the scheme because by creaming off some of our more able children it satisfies the vociferous parents, who without the scheme would be clamouring for improvements in education standards.

The Secretary of State also has a role in the physical management of schools. I have hitherto described to the House how some of the schools in my constituency are grossly neglected. Floors are not properly repaired, ceilings leak and some parts of the buildings have not been painted for 20 years. As a result, timber is rotting and must be replaced and window frames have deteriorated to the stage where they need to be ripped out and replaced at great expense. That could have been avoided had more money for maintenance been available earlier. My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) referred to some of those points.

One of the most important areas for the Government must be the management of teachers. When I was in industry it was considered that a major part of a manager's job was to ensure that the staff were properly motivated. Without motivation, a team or a work force will not see a job through to its proper completion. The majority of teachers in Essex are professional, dedicated and caring. They have frequently demonstrated how they care for the pupils in their charge and the diligence with which they carry out their duties. It is not surprising that they also care about their salaries, conditions and promotion prospects.

Although I believe that the teachers deserve more pay, I would not go so far as the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) and say that they should be compared directly with the police. There is a large element of danger in police work which is not usually found in the teaching profession, although I know that it can be found in some inner-city areas. The police work unsocial hours and—a major difference—they are not allowed to strike or take other industrial action. They are compensated for that in their salaries. If teachers did not take industrial action, it might be easier to increase their salaries.

Although the first offer of 4 per cent. was not satisfactory, especially as Scottish teachers were offered 5 per cent., I believe the current offer to be reasonable, and it should be seriously considered by the teachers' unions. The current offer of 6·9 per cent., together with the £1·25 billion that will be made available for appraisal over four years, makes an acceptable offer.

I know that teachers are unhappy about appraisal, but I do not know why. The hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand) said that other professions—engineers, for example—were not subject to appraisal. He is wrong. I have worked in the engineering, motor and chemical industries and I know that scientists, engineers and industrial managers are constantly appraised. When I was appraised, I found that the system recognised and rewarded ability, experience and professional strength. The system can be used to correct weaknesses in practice and gaps in knowledge. I strongly believe that if teachers accepted appraisal, they would discover its merits.

I think that I know why the teaching profession is worried about appraisal. During the recess I addressed a meeting of 200 teachers, and it became clear that they were frightened of appraisal mainly because they did not understand it and did not know how it would work. I ask my right hon. Friend what sort of scheme he envisages for them. He has said that he will discuss it with the teaching unions, but it is usual practice for an employer to make a detailed offer to an employee, who then responds. There have not yet been any detailed suggestions from employers on how the proposals should work. I strongly suggest that that is done as a step forward in solving this most unfortunate dispute.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) referred to too much emphasis being placed on input in the education profession and not enough on output. I wish to concentrate on output. Education has many purposes, but its main purpose must be to prepare students for work. We try to prepare them for apprenticeships or university, where they may undertake technical training to work in this highly technological age.

I do not believe that the old youth opportunities programme or the current youth training scheme are substitutes for apprenticeships. Of course, both schemes have been highly beneficial and better than no training at all—but the very nature of such training does not instill into pupils the technical discipline and depth of knowledge that they gain from apprenticeships. I am distressed when companies tell me that they cannot find toolmakers, electricians and electronics engineers of the right calibre—yet they and neighbouring companies are not taking on apprentices.

The figures show that from 1983 to 1985—only two years—the number of apprentices has fallen from 102,000 to only 73,000, a drop of 30 per cent. That is deplorable. I hope that we can reverse that trend either through the education system or through liaison and discussion with industry.

Should we create more science and engineering university places to compensate for the lack of apprentices? In the last six years the number of science and engineering graduates has increased by 30 per cent.—from 27 per cent. of all graduates in 1979 to 37 per cent. of all graduates in 1985. That is commendable and I am delighted.

However, we must not compare ourselves with ourselves. We must compare ourselves with international standards. Although a large percentage of students in higher education qualify in engineering, those qualifications are mainly of a lower standard than those of our international competitors.

If one adjusts the output of science and engineering graduates to the population of other countries, one discovers that Japan is producing three times as many engineering graduates per head of population, Germany two and a half times as many, and the United States one and half as times as many. Although we are improving, we are not yet doing well enough.

We must manage our schools better. It is necessary to motivate teachers. We must produce more science and engineering graduates. Science and engineering must be taught in a stimulating way to encourage people to study them. In that way more young people will be qualified in technical subjects on which the future of the country depends.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Mr. Gerry Bermingham.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It might be in order, but is it fair that the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) should be called to speak in the debate when he missed the first three hours of it, thus freezing out at least one Conservative Member who has sat throughout the six hours?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman says, that is not a point of order.

8.22 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I treat that point of order with the contempt that it deserves.

The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) allowed me to intervene in his speech earlier to mention handicapped people. I shall draw attention to the problems of the mentally and physically handicapped in my short contribution. The mentally and physically handicapped are the forgotten children of the medical services. No sin has been committed by those born with such afflictions. Society has a duty to make their lives tolerable and happy and to be as caring as possible. The facilities available for handicapped people are inadequate.

My constituency has a large mental hospital with a secure unit. It needs rebuilding resources, additional staff and facilities. It is the focal point for many handicapped people in the region. It was with great sadness that recently we learnt that facilities are to be withdrawn.

In our stressful society the number of mentally ill people is increasing steadily. Expenditure today is insufficient to meet the needs of the sick. Last year we discussed the problems of those who are incarcerated in secure units and secure hospitals. The Martin inquiry which Nancy Ritchie QC led, the report of which was released earlier this year, described the inadequate resources available to secure units. It stressed that those who had to man the wings at night did not have the necessary training. If we ask staff in secure hospitals such as Rampton to perform necessary duties, we must provide the facilities to ensure that they are adequately and fully trained.

Often people say that they do not want to know about mentally sick and handicapped people. It is not a popular issue. It is not a vote catcher. It does not command priority when allocating resources. I hope that we shall now devote the resources that are so desperately needed. I hope that in the months ahead the new Health Ministers will have the courage to bring the Martin report to the Floor of the House for debate.

I hope that the new Ministers will fight their corner for the mentally handicapped to ensure that increased resources are made available. We need additional funding for those who wish to foster or adopt mentally handicapped children. Such funding will not cost much in the long term, but it will earn vast amounts in human caring terms. Even in these supposedly economically deprived times, our society could make that investment.

A classic example of a vaccine damaged child is to be found in my constituency. Recently the compensation for such a child was raised to £20,000. In these inflationary times, £20,000 is nowhere near adequate to cover future costs, even if it is invested in the most profitable and excellent way. Parents grow old and the cost of supporting a child damaged through no fault of its own will become crippling in the child's later life. Even if that sum grows by 20 per cent. per annum and the parents have a return of 10 per cent. on it that money can never replace earning power. What will happen to the vaccine damaged person at 40 or 50 years of age when the parents have died? He or she will be taken from a loving and secure unit into an institution, even though it has a small investment income.

We have not made adequate provision for the children who have been damaged by vaccines. The case in my constituency is a classic example which draws my attention, and I hope that of the House, to the need. It is the lack of foresight, the lack of appreciation of the needs of the handicapped in one form or another, that is so sadly absent from the Gracious Speech. Even if it is lacking at this stage, however, I hope that the Government programme in the months ahead will make good that omission and will bring back to the Floor of the House one of the greatest social problems of our time, the fact that in the past few years the Government have failed to recognise the necessity of meeting the needs of those who are handicapped either physically or mentally, who are damaged by vaccination or are damaged by the stress of society and become mentally sick, and of those who have to care for them and try to cope with their problems. I hope that in the Session ahead we can once again turn our minds to those problems and do something to help those who cannot help themselves.

8.31 pm

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): I welcome the measures outlined in the Gracious Speech as both constructive and innovative. They are good for the nation, for its people and for the future. We often hear, as we have today, the wailings of Members on the Opposition Benches but this Gracious Speech is one for the times in which we live. It will capture the public mood and imagination because it shows that this Government are thinking, planning and acting in the interests of all the people of the country.

Today people have genuine concerns about a wide range of matters from law and order to health and social welfare, but they also realise more than ever before that the Government cannot promise the moon nor do everything. There is always a need for a partnership between the state and the individual, with the Government setting the scene for people to act. What is needed from the Government today is leadership and a realistic vision for the future, because people are realistic about the present and hopeful for the future. The Gracious Speech will be welcomed for offering the realism, radicalism and leadership needed today.

[Mr. David Evennett]

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) that the Opposition have few plans, few policies or ideas. All they want to do is spend more money. That is the sum total of their commitment.

At this stage the details of the various legislative proposals remain to be revealed, but in principle the proposals are impressive, offering a coherent vision of the United Kingdom tomorrow. Those of us on the Government Benches have a vision for our country, a vision of a fair and decent society, in which individuals can develop their talents and opportunities to the full, in which those who are less fortunate are well cared for, and in which the public sector, so vital in certain areas, is efficient, effective and providing first-class service to all.

To concentrate on one particular aspect of the Gracious Speech, education has been at the forefront of Government policy in the past few years and, as a consequence of the rather regrettable teachers' dispute, in the forefront of media coverage in 1985. I say "regrettable" because the teachers who strike are, in my opinion, unprofessional. They should let reason prevail and accept the present pay offer so that comprehensive negotiations can take place on a future career and salary structure for teachers. I do not, however, want to follow the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) in discussing the teachers' dispute and teachers' pay. All I want to say—and the Secretary of State has said it regularly—is that the vast majority of teachers do a first-class job, and their present action does not portray them in a good light. That is unfortunate.

Education remains a vital service. For an individual it has an important effect in shaping his or her life, but it is also important for our society because of its benefits to the nation as a whole. In the 1970s, under a Labour Government, we lost our vision of education for the future when the then Secretary of State, who has now changed parties, pursued a policy of destroying schools and with them the education and employment prospects of many young people. Today we are reaping the benefits of such destructive policies in our schools and in the employment market.

The Government have put the real issues in education back into the arena for discussion and debate, and we should all welcome that. They have also done much to update, improve and advance the education service for the good of all, not just for one section of the community but principally for the good of children who are the most important when it comes to education.

In the Gracious Speech we have been promised a major education Bill this Session, something that I positively welcome. We have been told that this legislation will seek to improve school management and promote the professional effectiveness of teachers, both real issues in education today and ones that the Government will deal with as part of their consistent programme of improvements in the education service.

In today's society, being a teacher in a classroom is not the easiest of jobs. We would all accept that. We have seen a decline in many of the values of our society so that problems in the classroom are all too common. Nevertheless, the classroom is also the place where some of those problems can be resolved and the decent values of a democratic society restored. In her speech to the House the other day, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that standards and values could only be improved by a concerted effort on the part of all—parents, teachers, church leaders, community groups, and so on. But teachers have a key role. They have a strong and lasting influence on the children of our nation, and their actions are often a deciding factor in whether or not a pupil develops into a decent citizen.

We are fortunate because the vast majority of our teachers are competent and, therefore, discharge their onerous tasks effectively, but there are some who have difficulties in the classroom either with discipline or in carrying out other teaching duties. These teachers need help, and the forthcoming legislation will give them that help by introducing professional assessment.

It is important that assessment is seen in that light because it is a powerful and effective way of helping to identify problems. It is not a witch hunt; it is simply a tool which allows the effectiveness of teachers to be assessed and, where deficiencies are found, to help overcome them. There are very few teachers — and I go round the schools in my constituency and my borough — who could be classed as incompetent and beyond help. That is nonsense. So, to me, assessment of effectiveness is not about finding bad teachers and sacking them; it is about helping teachers to be more effective in doing their jobs. That is why it has my support.

We have yet to see the details of the legislation, so it is difficult to know by whom or how the assessment will take place, but I am confident——

Dr. Michael Clark *rose*——

Mr. Evennett: I am sorry, but my time is too short.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science will wish to see assessment conducted in a considerate and comprehensive manner so that it is helpful in identifying the problems experienced by individual teachers and those experienced by the teaching profession as a whole.

One small matter that concerns me is who will conduct the assessment. As we all know, there are often personal differences which arise when people work closely together, and I am worried that an assessment may be left to one member of staff in the same school, whether a head of department, head teacher or whatever, and the person making the assessment may allow his or her judgment to be clouded by other issues, and the subsequent report may be slightly biased, unfair or damaging to the teacher concerned. Secondly, if assessment becomes the sole responsibility of the local education authority, again a teacher may be unfairly assessed but this time on the basis of his or her political views or beliefs. The House is only too aware of some local authorities which are overtly party political in what they do. It is not, therefore, beyond reason to conceive of the possibility of a bias in such an assessment. However, assessment need not be so subjective or open to abuse. I trust that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will give those points consideration when he structures his Bill and presents it to the House. I urge him to consider involving some other body in the assessment, such as the schools inspectorate, which has done a first-class job in all that it has attempted during the past few years.

The other matter that I wish to raise concerns the better management of schools. I welcome the opportunity for more parents to be involved in our schools generally and

specifically, for example, as school governors. If schools are to provide the educational facilities that society wishes, it is only logical that parents must be given a greater say in what goes on in them. Without their support and co-opeation all our efforts to improve education provision will be of little value.

The government of schools should be based on a power-sharing arrangement between parents and the education authority. I hope that my right hon. Friend intends to allow governing bodies to be divided roughly equally between parents and others. In that way extremist manipulation of governing bodies will not occur, and we shall have a far more representative sample of the views of society on the governing bodies of our schools. That would be more effective for education.

In conclusion, this is an exciting year for education because of the changes that the Secretary of State will introduce. I hope that the achievements that we have been fortunate enough to witness during the past few years will not be destroyed by the continuation of the teachers' dispute. I hope that it will end soon so that we can get back to the real business of improving education for the whole of society and, most important, for our children.

8.41 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): There are many tragedies outside the House, and the Government are responsible for them because of their legislation and policies since 1979. The Secretary of State for Education and Science can well give me a look. He is one of the ringleaders who has caused our national problems by introducing awful legislation. Even before 1979, the right hon. Gentleman ruined the Health Service by its reorganisation. Since then, even Conservative Members have said that the reorganisation of the Health Service in 1974 was a disaster. The present Secretary of State for Education and Science sits on the Government Front Bench, but he was responsible for that.

The tragedies do not end there. In 1979 my constituents had certain rights, but when the right hon. Gentleman was appointed Secretary of State for Trade and Industry he removed those rights. Since the Tories came to office, five pits in my constituency have been closed, but no new industries or finance have been introduced there to help my constituents, especially the youngsters who wanted to work at the pits, to get back to work. That is a tragedy.

The £10 million of enterprise money that is knocking around for industry is a joke. Back home we are holding regular meetings to sort something out, but we are not getting very far. Meanwhile, the number of youngsters joining the dole queue increases.

Now education is being put in a mess, again by the same Secretary of State. The teachers will win the battle, because they undoubtedly have a good case. My constituents tell me so. Indeed, I do not have to go so far, because two of my children are in teaching. I get the message loud and clear when my married daughter comes at the weekend, and from my daughter who still lives at home. They can see what is going on, and they are adament that they will win. I support them and I believe that they will win. Earlier today my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) pointed out how teachers' earnings have fallen continuously under the Government. Is it any wonder that people are up in arms?

Mr. Pawsey: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Haynes: No, I shall not give way.

When one looks at the education system that the Government are running, it is no wonder that people are up in arms. I have had my say about the Secretary of State for Education and Science, but I hope to God that the Prime Minister does not offer him the Chancellorship. By God, we would be in a mess. That would be the end. What a mess we would have to sort out when we returned to office after the general election.

While doing my duty on the Front Bench, I discovered that the right hon. Gentleman was also responsible for high-rise flats. Throughout the country one sees the problems that they have created. The right hon. Gentleman has created a mess in education, industry and social services. I hope that he does not become the Chancellor of the Exchequer, because if he does, we shall be in a even worse mess.

The Gracious Speech says many things, but it does not say much about some matters, including the review of social security benefits. The Labour party has made it clear how people who are already suffering will suffer even more. Such people come to my surgery on Saturday mornings. Elderly ladies who at present receive heating allowances will be disqualified if the Government get away with their proposals.

My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) made it clear how much money would be cut from social security benefits. Here the Government go again, hitting the lowest paid and those without a job, and slapping £10 million on the salaries of the highly paid. That is easy. It has been the same with all Tory Administrations. They have always looked after their own. The end result is that they pour money into the Conservative party coffers. It all fits.

I am trying to stick rigidly to the Gracious Speech. I listened to my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South-East and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), who said that hon. Members on both sides were worried about law and order. That is true. We are all worried, and we must get together and do something about it. I have some facts with me. Today we have 10,000 more police officers than in 1979, millions of extra pounds have been spent on equipment for the police, and police earnings have been well above those of anyone else, but despite that crime and violence have increased by 40 per cent. What a marvellous job the Government are doing. They appear to be going the wrong way about it, and the British people have rumbled them.

Mr. Pawsey: Will the hon. Gentleman give way this time?

Mr. Haynes: Tell him to sit down, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I remember listening to a Home Office Minister speaking at the Tory party conference. *[Interruption.]* While hon. Gentlemen are bawling, they are missing important points.

Mr. Pawsey: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Haynes: I listened to a Minister at the Home Office telling the Tory party conference about stiffer penalties for drug dealers. Hefty financial penalties will be imposed and one of the end results will be that they will land in the nick, and that will create another problem.

Like the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), I too am interested in the prison service,

[Mr. Haynes]

and I have here the real message from the Prison Officers Association. It is that prison officers are in a mess now and do not have the staff to cover the job in the prison service. If we add to the prison population, the prison officers will have a worse job, and they are having enough difficulties at present with drugs coming in.

I should like to tell the House about another matter, because it really takes the biscuit. Apparently the Prison Officers Association is being asked to participate in training so that its members can cope with the change that has taken place in the levels of violence and drug abuse. The Home Office sent a video tape to a prison so that prison officers could watch the tape and receive training, but they do not have a video machine to play it on. The prison officers wrote to the Home Office and the Home Office said, "Sorry, we do not have the money for one."

That is the way that this Government are carrying on. Is it any wonder that we are in such a mess? It is high time that the Government woke up and started going down the road, in the interests of the people whom they are supposed to serve, and stopped serving their masters who pour money into the Conservative party coffers. It is time that they started looking after the ordinary folk because, if they do not, we shall do it when we get back into office.

8.52 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful to have a chance to speak briefly in this debate on the Queen's Speech. It will not be possible for me to follow the wide-ranging choice of topics of the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), but I should like to refer briefly to education. We have had an interesting exchange of views on this important topic. In particular, I welcome the reference in the Queen's Speech to legislation for improved management in schools and legislation to promote the professional effectiveness of teachers. The theme of my approach to this subject, as is the theme of the Government's approach, is the intention to improve standards of education.

I want to mention something which I am sure other hon. Members have also encountered. Even though I was an educator myself and am therefore prejudiced in these matters, over and over again I receive complaints about standards in education, in spite of the excellent work the Government are doing to try to improve matters. We are still getting complaints about numeracy, literacy and the general level of education in schools. In spite of the real achievements that are being made by the Government, it is correct to say that all is not well with education.

Together with my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) I have been working with the university authorities in the University of East Anglia to make sure that it is possible for speakers to come into the university and address students on any subject about which they feel strongly. We have had some success in that aim. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security was able to attend such a meeting only a few months ago. A great deal of preparation and trouble was necessary in advance in order to ensure that, even at a university as good as the University of East Anglia, that meeting went off without a hitch and successfully.

It is therefore with great distress that I and many of my constituents, probably the vast majority of my constituents, witnessed the appalling scenes in Manchester university last week when my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office was not allowed to speak freely in one of our institutions of higher education. Yet Robbins, the founder of the modern idea of the university, set down as one of the principles that a university should be for the transmission of a common culture and common standards of citizenship. I am afraid we are seeing that even in that respect we are failing in all too many respects.

Education is in the front line of our battle for civilised values, and I therefore support the remarks by my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) who mentioned exactly the same point in his excellent speech. The matter of the promotion of professional effectiveness of teachers is also referred to in the Queen's Speech. That, of course, is linked to the present teachers' dispute which has been referred to, not surprisingly, on a number of occasions in this debate. In Norfolk, during the last few days pupils have gone on strike as a protest against teachers going on strike.

I worked in teaching and in schools for many years, and to me that is an appalling indictment of the kind of leadership our young people are getting. On top of the tree of responsibility for this must be those union leaders who are taking teachers out of the schools on strike. I am not suggesting that the blame for this dispute should be laid at one particular door, but this dispute is wholly irresponsible and completely against the best interests of professional teachers. I speak as someone who spent his working life in schools before becoming a Member of Parliament. It is completely against the interests of the teachers for anyone to lead them out on strike. Pupils coming out on strike is surely an indictment of the leadership of the teachers' unions. It is all very sad. That is the view of the vast majority of my constituents, whatever party they support.

As a former teacher, I am aware of the problems in education. Low morale has been referred to and reference has also been made to a reluctance to strike. Many teachers in Norwich who took part in this dispute have spoken to me about their reluctance to do so, and I accept that. I am also aware of the tremendous commitment of teachers to extra-curricular activities, in addition to what they do in the classroom. I support hon. Members on both sides of the House who have spoken highly of the excellent work our teachers do. Many of the problems we are facing have arisen not just since 1983 or 1979, or even since 1974: they are long standing and will not go away that easily.

During my time as a professional teacher I became convinced that certain reforms were necessary to help the morale of teachers. To put it in a nutshell and without specifying in detail exactly what I mean, many of the very reforms that I wanted to see, like more help for new teachers, more in-service training and a better and fairer salary structure, are part and parcel of what the Government are now putting forward and trying to talk to the teachers about. I hope that the latest offer can at least be debated and discussed. It was a matter of great sadness to me that the leadership of the NUT saw fit to dismiss the latest offer after a mere 20 minutes.

I welcome the changes resulting from the review of the teachers' panel on the Burnham committee and hope that they will lead to an early settlement. However, even if the dispute is settled quickly, I fear that urgent reform, to the benefit of teachers, may yet be delayed. I hope that all those concerned in the matter will see sense before it is too late.

There are many other issues, not referred to in the Queen's Speech, on which I feel strongly. This morning I had the chance to be at a meeting at the Institute of Physics to discuss the shortage of physics teachers. I listened with great interest earlier to the speech of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short). Although I do not agree with all her conclusions about science education, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science will give serious consideration to the crisis that has arisen from the shortage of physics and mathematics teachers. I think that he is already aware of my views on the problem.

I welcome the fact that the Government are giving thought to and making proposals about the composition of governing bodies in schools. We are moving slowly towards the right balance. I am one of those hon. Members who are a little fearful of giving too much weight and power to parents. Therefore, I welcome the direction in which the Government seem to be moving. I believe that there should be an increase in the representation of community leaders—people in business, in the churches and in the various professions. Perhaps we should be moving away from the idea of political or local authority appointees towards boards of governors made up of wise men from the community. Although I would welcome the appointment of councillors on governing bodies, we should move away from a system in which power is with local authorities as such, and put the greater power instead in the hands of headmasters. That point has been referred to already in several excellent speeches.

Education has suffered for too long by being entangled with that other knotty problem of local government finance. I should like to see education removed, once and for all, from local government. I accept that the arguments against that proposal are powerful, and I have not the time to address the problem in detail, but I can see no clear way forward until we finally get to grips with the proposal. Therefore, I hope that it will not be too long before we see the end of the Burnham negotiating committee in its present form and the setting up of a professional teachers' council — a suggestion made by at least one of the teachers' unions. I hope that education will move away from its entanglement with local government politics.

I welcome the proposals in the Queen's Speech. As I have said, I am looking forward to more radical measures on education, because our future—I think this view is supported in all parts of the House—depends on our young people. I shall continue, as one of the Norwich Members, to support measures which will lead to higher standards of education, to higher morale for teachers, pupils and all concerned with education, and to better discipline in our schools. In the words of the school report, we are on the right track and we are doing well, but we must try harder.

9.2 pm

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): I cannot agree with the remarks of the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) about taking education away from local government. Nevertheless, I am in a strange situation. Although I disagree with one Conservative Member, which is my natural bent, I agree with most of what was said by another, the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark). I find that he, like myself, is an engineer, and I concur completely with many of the things that he said. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is not present because I should have liked to ask his permission to use part of his speech at any Labour party meetings that I attend.

There are only two lines in the Queen's Speech about education issues, and I regret that more was not said about education, but those two lines cover the Government's concept of education and what they feel should be done about it. The Government are tinkering with administrative parts of the service. They are not talking about radically changing the education service, as it should be changed. They are complacent about the present ills in the service. They must recognise that education is one of the basic needs of the nation while considering other elements such as employment, the economy and increasing social problems. The Government do not seem particularly keen to pursue any of those subjects.

The present teachers' dispute is justified. It has been covered in the debate so I shall not touch on it too much. It is a symptom—only a part—of the chronic disease that is rapidly spreading through the education service at all levels. The Secretary of State's contribution over the past few months to that doctrinal problem can be described as an injection of polluted vaccine. His recent comments and statements have served only to make the patient more susceptible to the illness that he is suffering from.

I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members took the same opportunity as I did during the long recess to visit schools and educational establishments in their constituency. I am interested in education matters, and I thought the recess was a grand time to do something about it. Before I came to the House, I had a long relationship with the education service in my county, both as a member of the education committee, and as leader of the county council.

I was constantly reminded by teachers during that long vacation, from the end of July to the middle of October, that I get longer holidays than they do. During that time, I visited eight schools. The schools were in three categories—middle schools, high schools and a special school. During those visits, I had the opportunity to meet parents, governors, heads of the schools, the staff and everyone involved in the education service, including the children. One of the major topics of discussion was pay but there were other elements, and I shall talk about those rather than teachers' pay because it has been well covered. If as many £1 coins had been given to teachers as there have been words talked about the subject, there would be no need to worry about the dispute.

The general public feel that the education service is a vital element of our society. Many people have now become more aware of its value. It is facing many problems, many of which are becoming accepted as the norm, such as deterioration of buildings and lack of resources. I shall give one example of a school in my constituency. It is a Roman Catholic school, Saint Robert's in Morpeth. Two thirds of the building is now out of use simply because it is falling down. The authority has never been able to provide money to repair the building and the school is now using temporary classrooms. The children might have to be relocated from the building, which is closely associated with the Roman Catholic church in the town, to a building about half a mile away. That is damaging to the development of Roman Catholic education in that town. There will be a loss of the links between the church and the school. That is not because of a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the education

[Mr. Jack Thompson]

department or the local authority, but because of a lack of finance, tied up with the rate support grant problems and the spending restrictions.

In my constituency, there has been universal criticism of the lack of materials and equipment. As recently as last Friday, I visited a school where I am chairman of the governors. The head told me that the school required a new television set. That television set cost about £300. The authority gave £200. The school has borrowed £100 from the parent-teacher association so that it can purchase the television set.

We have made progress in education over the years. My father was not as well educated as me, and I went through difficult times in the 1940s. My son was better educated than me. I am not sure whether my grandson will have the same opportunities as his father.

The following quotation sums up the state of education today. Ashington high school has its 25th anniversary this year—it was opened in 1960—and in his report, the school's headmaster concludes by saying:

"And what of the future? A Yorkshire exile's honesty compels me to state that I am afraid of what it might bring. At the moment we are more than holding our own in the face of appalling economic and social problems and an educational atmosphere which is bedevilled by a dispute caused by political indifference, absence of DES leadership, lack of funding and a frightening decline in morale. At the time of writing I see no prospect that the scenario will change for the better, and this when the educational world is being asked to introduce the General Certificate of Secondary Education, the Certificate of Pre Vocational Education and 'AS' examinations, pre-vocational courses, student profiling and credit accumulation schemes, science and Craft Design Technology for all, to name but a few of the monthly directives which our various masters send north. These facts have to be stated, not dodged, even in the context of a 25 years celebration!"

What a comment about 25 years of the life of a school.

9.11 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): This has been a wide-ranging debate, covering many issues—education, pensions, the National Health Service, disablement, Sunday trading, law and order and even Stansted. The underlying theme has been the concern that is now felt throughout the country about what is happening to the services that are so important to civilised life. Our people understand, even if the Government do not, that comprehensive welfare services and a dynamic and vigorous education system provide the essential framework without which it is not possible for the country to survive and prosper. That is why polls show that they are prepared to give such a high priority to securing decent pensions, a high quality National Health Service and good education for all.

There is a cryptic sentence in the Queen's Speech referring to education:

"Legislation will be introduced for England and Wales to improve the management of schools and to promote the professional effectiveness of teachers."

From newspaper leaks, I understand that that refers to the representation and functions of school governing bodies and to assessment and appraisal. Without having heard the Secretary of State speak or seen the legislation, it is difficult for an Opposition spokesman to comment in detail.

With regard to representation on governing bodies, I am glad that the Secretary of State has accepted that his original Green Paper proposal that there should be a majority of parent representatives was unworkable. Of course, there must be an increase in parental representation, but what is required is a balance among parents, the local authority, community and teachers.

On the issue of functions, there is little doubt that we need to clarify and, in some areas, strengthen the powers of governors. They must have a voice in the choosing of staff, curriculum, discipline and financial matters. However, as with representation, there has to be a balance. In the end, the exercise of powers and functions of governing bodies has to be compatible with and within the framework of local authority control and policy. We look forward to seeing the Bill.

I hope that the Government do not intend to impose a system of assessment on the teaching profession. Assessment, or appraisal as I prefer to call it, could be useful in assisting the professional development of teachers. The teachers' unions have already said that they are in favour of appraisal, contrary to what some hon. Members have suggested, providing that it is not linked directly to pay, promotion or dismissal. The Secretary of State should not be imposing legislation but discussing with the teachers and employers how best to introduce such a system. Unless a system of appraisal has the support of teachers it will not be effective.

The management of schools and teacher appraisal are important issues but they do not address the growing crisis in British schools. I have repeatedly warned the Secretary of State in the past two years about the declining standards of educational provision in too many of our schools and the appalling state of morale in the teaching profession. The Secretary of State's adviser, Her Majesty's inspectorate, has made abundantly clear what is happening in the schools: the inadequate provision of books and equipment, schools in a bad state of repair and maintenance, too many parents having to make substantial contributions to the purchase of essentials and too many classes, either too large or, in the case of primary schools, of mixed age groups.

The picture consistently presented by the Her Majesty's inspectorate to the Secretary of State has been confirmed recently by an independent survey carried out by the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations. The survey was based on a questionnaire sent to 4,800 home school associations and covering 609 primary schools and 201 secondary schools. The survey states that, on average, teachers have larger classes, less free time and fewer resources to enable them to teach with maximum effect.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): Would the hon. Gentleman confirm that only one in five people responded to that survey?

Mr. Radice: That may be true, but the questionnaire still covers 609 primary and 201 secondary schools which is, I think the hon. Lady would agree, a large section of our school population.

The survey goes on to warn that, instead of a broadening of the curriculum, a narrowing is taking place and that parental contribution has sharply increased in school funding. It concludes that the overall picture is one of an alarming state of deterioration as schools struggle to maintain standards in the face of an increasing lack of resources.

The Secretary of State will answer that, while the Government have been in power, spending per pupil has risen and pupil-teacher ratios have fallen—I anticipate his already familiar refrain. If the Secretary of State is honest, he would also admit that that has happened not because expenditure has increased — in fact, the proportion of GDP spent on education has fallen significantly since 1979—but because the number of pupils has fallen. Falling rolls create serious problems relating to curriculum, access and costs. They also present great opportunities. A Government with a higher priority for education than this one would have used the leeway opened up by falling rolls to tackle the crisis of provision which has been revealed by the Secretary of State's advisers. This Government, and the Secretary of State above all, are against public spending. I remember that in the 1970s the right hon. Gentleman said that one of the great evils in Britain was excessive public expenditure.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Excessive expenditure?

Mr. Radice: I do not believe that we are spending an excessive amount on education, and I hope that the hon. Lady does not think so. Even so, I had expected to hear that the Secretary of State was in the forefront of Ministers fighting for extra resources for their Departments. In the leaks about the public spending battle which we have had from Whitehall, we have heard about housing, energy and even defence, but there has been a deafening silence about education. I can only hope that the Secretary of State has not, in his usual Quixotic manner, offered more lambs for the slaughter——

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Of course he has.

Mr. Radice: He has done so before. We await with great interest the statement on educational expenditure later this week.

On the teachers' dispute, which has so disrupted our schools for nine months, I say immediately that the Opposition believe that the teachers have a powerful case, as many hon. Members on both sides of the House have said. The dispute is about much more than pay. Rightly, teachers are fed up with the way in which their pay has been eroded. More generally, they feel undervalued.

The teachers must teach in the overcrowded classrooms and cope with the shortages of books and equipment that we have discussed. The teachers must motivate pupils whose only realistic prospect is prolonged unemployment. The teachers must deal with the consequences of poverty and deprivation in our inner cities. Teaching has always been tough and demanding. The Government's policies have made it even more so.

It is demoralising to teachers—I know this because they have told me—to hear Ministers, including the Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor, blame them unjustifiably for a host of social evils. Even the Secretary of State, who is after all the leader of the education community, has too often indulged in generalised criticisms of the profession. He should know better. Hon. Members will understand the strength of feeling among teachers only by taking those underlying discontents into account.

The Secretary of State's handling of the dispute has made matters far worse. It was typical of the Government that they should choose to announce massive increases for top salaries when they refused to provide extra resources for teachers, and when negotiations between employers and teachers had reached a critical stage. It was typical of the Secretary of State that he refused to fund the local authority employers' structures package and announced how much he would put in only at the beginning of August — six months into the dispute. The sum was significantly less than that behind the local authorities' package.

At the root of the dispute is the Government's inconsistent, confused and unfair public sector pay policy, and their hard line on local authority spending. The assumption behind this year's rate support grant was that teachers would receive only a 3 per cent. pay increase, which in real terms would have meant a pay cut. Once the local authorities decided, rightly, to pay more to settle this year's claim—that is what we must do now—they were in danger of losing central Government funds and even of being rate-capped. The current offer of 6·9 per cent., end-loaded to 7·5 per cent., would cost local education authorities considerably more than the £290 million that it would put into teachers' pockets.

If the Government really wish to see a settlement to this year's claim they should provide extra resources. At the very least the Secretary of State should ask the Cabinet to authorise the disregard of the penalties which this latest offer would impose on local education authorities. I should like to hear what the Secretary of State has to say about that.

Even if a settlement is made on this year's claim, which must still be in doubt, it will not satisfy the teachers——

Mr. Madel *rose*——

Mr. Radice: I will not give way at this point.

If standards are to be improved and reforms of the curriculum and examination system are to be carried through, there must be a long-term settlement of the teachers' case. That is why there needs to be a quick-acting, independent inquiry into teachers' pay and its structure, and the Government ought to guarantee to fund the findings of that inquiry.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): That is the responsible thing to do.

Mr. Radice: We rightly expect much from teachers, and they, in their turn, rightly expect to be paid a professional level of salary. We have heard a lot of talk from the Prime Minister and others about teachers having to act as professionals. If that is so, they should be paid a professional level of salary. Teachers must also be highly valued for what they do. I want to hear more about that from the Government.

Whatever the merits of the matters raised in the Queen's Speech, unless the Secretary of State also tackles the twin crises of the declining provision in our schools and the deteriorating morale of the teaching profession he will rightly be judged to be fiddling while Rome burns.

9.28 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) explained that he could not be present at this stage of the debate because of a long-standing commitment. The House will not expect me to follow up

[Sir Keith Joseph]

the questions raised by the hon. Gentleman, as I have enough to speak on in connection with education and science.

I should like to make one general point before I deal with the subjects that have arisen today. Both the hon. Member for Oldham, West and the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) made comments about the lack of resources that the Government feel able to make available. That echoes a widespread sense that resources are not as widely within reach as politicians and the public would like. I wonder why that point is not more frequently debated in the House. It is not as if successive Governments do not want to please the public. Of course they do, because they want to be re-elected.

There must be something behind the lack of resources that explains that constant problem of successive Governments. It so happens that the problem is explained conveniently to the public in a table on page 22 of this week's copy of *The Economist*. Many of my hon. Friends have recognised that productivity in this country is far lower than it could be and far lower than it is in north-west Europe or. indeed, in North America.

The result of that low productivity is that we have lower spending power both individually and for social services and fewer resources generally for private and public use. One has only to visit north-west Europe to see how much the higher standard of living, greater prosperity and on the whole better endowed social services mean to the public there. One can put the blame for that state of affairs wherever one wishes—on successive Governments of both parties, on management, on trade unions or on opinion formers, in any combination that one wishes—but it has been true for decades. Admittedly, this Government are slightly reducing the gap. Nevertheless, there is a deep lesson for the whole House in the facts exposed in that little table, familiar to all of us but seldom sufficiently discussed.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Keith Joseph: No, this is not an economic debate. I am not allocating blame as I should like. I am speaking in broad terms of the background to the subject under discussion.

Mr. Bennett *rose*——

Sir Keith Joseph: No. The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) did not give way and I have a lot to cover.

Mr. Bennett *rose*——

Sir Keith Joseph: All right, I will give way just once to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett).

Mr. Bennett: In 1979 the Government's justification of tax cuts for the very rich was to solve that very problem. Six years later, the problem has not been solved. We have had to pay for those tax cuts by savage reductions in Government expenditure on education. Those cuts have created many of the problems that the right hon. Gentleman now has to address.

Sir Keith Joseph: No, we spoke of the need for us to try to win office in two successive Parliaments and we referred to the problems of this country as deepseated. One of the problems was that at that time we had 98 per cent. taxation at the highest levels—higher than anywhere else in the free world—which was discouraging the enterprise and initiative from which jobs and prosperity come.

It must at least be conceded to the Government that productivity in this country has risen far faster than it has in north-west Europe or the United States and that investment has risen faster——

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Investment has fallen faster.

Sir Keith Joseph: No, both manufacturing investment and investment generally have risen faster. I will send the details to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Bermingham: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman is not going to send us the Adam Smith report.

Sir Keith Joseph: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would benefit greatly from reading the great books of Adam Smith—"The Theory of the Moral Sentiments" as well as "The Wealth of Nations".

Today's debate has benefited from a number of speeches not on the main subject to which I am replying. I pay tribute to the force and sincerity of the contributions of my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on overseas aid, my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) on airports, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on Warnock, and the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) on the elderly and on a subject on which I used to enjoy being his ally—rehabilitation. *[Interruption.]* That is a serious claim and I do not think that the hon. Gentleman will deny it. I should also mention the contribution of the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) on the National Health Service and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) on Sunday trading and medical mistakes. On the latter subject, my hon. Friend was joined rather passionately by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) who, like the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), spoke about the disabled. I am sure that the Ministers concerned will heed the speeches made on all those subjects.

I wish to discuss specifically education and science. I acknowledge the continuing interest in science of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short). I wish that more hon. Members took such a deep interest. There is no lack of contact between the Government and the Science Ministers of north-west European Governments. In recent months, I have seen the French and Italian Ministers of Science and Technology. Recently the West German Minister, for a personal reason, cancelled only at the last moment a visit to Britain.

The Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, my hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), is at a great function tonight at which his presence is required as the local Member of Parliament. I hope that my hon. Friend, who is intensely diligent, will be acquitted of any disrespect to the House. He is constantly in touch with his opposite numbers in north-west Europe, as is my hon. Friend the Minister for Information Technology.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East made a serious point. Members of the Advisory Board of

the Research Councils have spoken to me about their worry that so many scientific opportunities are available yet there is not enough finance to deal with them all. The board has impressed upon me the serious brain drain of much of our scientific talent. The Government are aware of the problem and are worried by it, and we shall consider what it is possible to do.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) spoke of the need for more science students in higher education. The Government agree, but the House realises that for people to become science students in higher education they must have made the right choices at school at the age of 14. Not only must there be teachers of science, maths and physics—the conditional offer by us, of extra money could make possible the sort of pay needed to attract such skills that are in short supply—but we must persuade parents to tell their daughters that it is perfectly respectable and sensible for girls to study science and engineering. They are just as good at it as men and the country would benefit from their contribution. I must controvert a remark by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) who said that there were proportionally fewer students in higher education in Britain than in some of our neighbours' countries. In fact, the proportion is about the same as in north-west Europe—fewer than in America and Japan, but at least the same as in West Germany and France.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) rightly drew attention to the appalling behaviour of some students when my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office recently spoke at Manchester. We await further explanation of that episode.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East knows that one of our problems is that many university laboratories contain obsolete equipment. I am glad to say that the Government enabled a start to be made on re-equipping some of those laboratories last year, and that will continue.

I note the comments of the hon. Members for Eccles and for Wolverhampton, North-East about the pay of clinical dons.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) rightly spoke of the importance of technology. He will be aware that in preparation for a further spread of the technical and vocational education initiative, the Manpower Services Commission, acting on behalf of the Department of Education and Science, has been given a substantial amount of extra money—£20 million—by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the last Budget to provide training for teachers to equip them to teach under the TVEI.

As for the effectiveness of our schooling, I acknowledge straightaway that teaching is hard.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Keith Joseph: No. I will not give way again.

I acknowledge that HMI reports often show, after full inspections, that some teaching — not only science teaching — is too didactic. The Government intend to increase in-service training to help teachers to improve their performance where necessary, but the constant cry of Her Majesty's inspectors, throughout almost all their reports, goes far wider. They say that, on the whole, teachers do not expect nearly enough from children of all abilities; expectations are too low. I believe that it has been forgotten that stretching is part of caring. I do not pretend that teaching is easy. It is a very hard job.

I must move quickly if I am to deal with all the questions raised in the debate. My hon. Friends the Members for Bedfordshire, South-West and for Rochford and the hon. Member for Durham, North mentioned maintenance and decoration in schools. It is true that the last HMI report on the state of schools, in connection with finance, drew attention to a worrying lack of maintenance in a number of cases. That reflects accumulated neglect over many years, but those who quote selectively from the report do not do justice to the report as a whole, which draws attention equally emphatically to the inspectors' view that some local education authorities waste a great deal of money that could be used for more important educational purposes. Both those propositions are found in their report.

The hon. Member for Durham, North quoted a report by the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations, but I must agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) who pointed out that the report was based on only about 3 per cent. of primary schools. That would be a large enough survey, if it were statistically and scientifically based, to reflect the state of opinion between parties. It is not a number that we can afford to neglect. However, the survey was not scientific and, without denying that there are serious failings in school maintenance in many cases, we must take the report with a pinch of salt.

The Government's intention to put into legislation the proposals in "Better Schools" for the government of schools has been generally welcomed, not least by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North. I can assure my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden that the Government intend to initiate a modest effort to train governors.

The important subject of appraisal was mentioned by the hon. Members for Durham, North, for Cambridgeshire, North-East and for Easington (Mr. Dormand) and by my hon. Friends the Members for Saffron Walden, for Rochford and for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett). The Government see the appraisal of teachers as being intended to help both the professional development of teachers and the management of the teaching force. For that purpose, we intend to expand and to make more effective the provision of in-service training, so that those who need that training for their own career development and increased effectiveness will, I hope, find it available. The Government intend to seek an enabling power in the legislation to be brought before the House. We hope that the powers will not have to be used, because we hope very much that the employers of teachers and the teachers' associations will agree on methods—I use the plural — of appraisal. There will be no single "staff college" method that the Government will seek to impose. There will not be an imposition in that sense.

After all, appraisal is widespread now in an unsystematic way. We seek that there shall be fair systems of appraisal made systematically available so that the career and professional development of teachers may be made more effective.

The methods that will be used will, we hope, be worked out between the local education authorities and their

[Sir Keith Joseph]

teachers. We are waiting to put to use the taxpayers' money that lies ready for such use in pilot schemes which the LEAs that volunteer for the purpose will try out.

We recognise that time will inevitably be involved in appraising, and in the document that we produced on school teacher numbers and deployment we acknowledged that more teachers than would otherwise be needed would, taking account of the time to be devoted to appraisal, have to be financed. There is to be a conference this week in Birmingham on the subject of appraisal.

Among the many speeches made in this debate, I had a great deal of sympathy for the general views expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). He made a number of comments that were worth considering and in particular he said, rightly, that too much attention was given in the House exclusively to inputs into education—of course, inputs are important—but not enough to outputs — to the benefits that education supplies. After all, we are speaking of compulsory education; we require 11 years' compulsory schooling of children.

There can be no doubt, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling emphasised, that there is an intense and widespread desire for better schools and higher standards. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North confirmed that from his point of view. We can all rejoice that on the aim of higher standards and better schools there is agreement in the House as a whole. We all agree that there are improvements that we can seek.

I acknowledge that teaching is hard. It is harder than it has been in the past, and we are asking more of it. I acknowledge that not all parents are an active help to the teacher in encouraging their children at school. I acknowledge that the curriculum has not been ideal, though we are trying, and, I believe, succeeding, to gain consent from the partners concerned to make it more appropriate—to make it more a matter of the application as well as just the acquisition of knowledge; to encourage the speaking of foreign languages, to encourage discussion in the classroom, to encourage experiment in laboratories and to encourage manual and technical skills—problem-solving skills and design skills. I acknowledge that the examination system has not been ideal, though, as the House knows, we have made decisions which will lead to a change there.

I acknowledge that most teachers are good and dedicated and work extremely hard. However, I cannot reconcile the behaviour of many of the teachers now with professionalism. I acknowledge that many teachers are refusing to disrupt and that heads are bearing an intense burden to try to safeguard the interests of the children. Moreover, I acknowledge that very many teachers must be anguished at what they are doing or at what is being done, and I repeat that many teachers are refusing to disrupt.

Having said that, I must fulfil the expectation that the hon. Member for Durham, North predicted. I shall say that, since the Conservatives came to office in 1979, the pupil-teacher ratio has gone to record levels. In other words, there are fewer pupils per teacher than ever before. Moreover, in terms of real spending — spending per child in real terms—it has gone up since 1979 by 16 per cent.

I also acknowledge that this improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio and in real spending is not manifest to many teachers and parents, because many local education authorities are choosing to deploy the money that they control in ways that are relatively wasteful. For example, they do so by extravagant school cleaning and arrangements for school meals, or in failing to propose the closure of half-empty schools.

I have never claimed that this improvement in spending per head is disconnected from the fall in the number of pupils. There are 1 million fewer pupils in our schools than there were seven or eight years ago. The Government have reduced the amount of spending on education proportionately less than the fall in the number of children, so that in real terms there is a rise in spending per head.

I turn to the sad subject of the teacher dispute, and I start with a little history. Until recently there were plenty of candidates for teacher training who were thought to be at least of acceptable quality. True, there was widespread grumbling on pay, but it did not appear necessary to change pay in order to recruit and retain teachers of the desired quality. Even then, we were not able—this has been true for many years—to recruit teachers for certain subjects such as mathematics, craft, design, technology and physics. Recently, there have been all too many anecdotes of good teachers quitting. That has not yet been noticeable in the published statistics, but the anecdotal evidence is enough to make us all deeply worried.

In the light of these changed circumstances, we have recognised that it is necessary to alter the pay and promotion structures so that employers of teachers may be able to recruit, retain and motivate teachers of the right quality. That argument is over. The Government acknowledge that to recruit, retain and motivate people of the right quality a new career structure with money differentially available will be needed. That is why I offered, without any quantification, extra money from mid-1984 should a bargain agreeable to the Government be reached. Alas, the discussion of that bargain—put forward by the employers, in terms of which the Government did not wholly approve—which might have led to modification, which in turn might have led to extra money for this current year, was brought to an end by the National Union of Teachers walking out of the discussions in December 1984.

This year, in August, the Government made available an additional sum of £1,250 million over four years on certain conditions, and that extra money was embodied in an offer made by the employers on 12 September. Alas, the unions summarily rejected it.

We believe that a new career structure and the acknowledgment of the conditions of service are necessary for primary, secondary and special school teachers. We have accepted the need for a new career structure, with pay for recruiting, retaining and motivating people of the right quality. The additional pay made possible by the Government on certain conditions would be additional to annual pay increases.

But I must emphasise that the Government would only release this extra money subject to two factors. The first is that the teachers' duties were clarified, and I should perhaps explain why the Government regard this as important. We do so because, if there are to be better schools and higher standards, we think it necessary for the employers, parents and children to know what exactly the teachers can be relied upon to do. We are relying upon them to do the same as teachers have traditionally done for

decades, plus the one additional duty of appraisal and minus another duty that has been disputed — midday supervision.

The great Houghton report — that is how it is regarded by the teachers—stated in its last paragraph:

"We wish to stress that we believe the salary levels we recommend justify expectation of professional standards of performance in return."

Precisely the same sentiment was expressed in the Clegg report in 1979, yet, make what excuses they like, the teachers have effectively failed to carry out those wishes. Both Houghton and Clegg represent judgments of what should rightly be expected of teachers, yet neither expression was converted into contractual terms. After Clegg, the employers made a long and sustained effort to make progress through talks. First, there was the conditions of service working party, which resulted in no agreement. Then there was the sub-committee of the Burnham committee, the joint structure working party, which the NUT walked out of in December last year. It is really disingenuous of the teachers' unions to maintain that they have tried to negotiate conditions, because the results show that they have not been willing to discuss and agree the conditions expected of them by Houghton and Clegg.

Of equal importance to conditions of service is our belief that we should provide a promotion and career structure for teachers that recruits, retains, motivates and rewards effective teachers of the right quality. In the past we were told that one of the main reasons for the demoralisation of teachers was the fall in the number of promotion prospects due to a fall in school rolls.

Mr. Radice *rose*——

Sir Keith Joseph: I shall not give way.

Yet the conditional offer made available by the Government has enabled the employers to provide for 70,000 or more extra promotions. One in five classroom teachers can expect promotion if that offer is accepted on the conditions that have been proposed. The offer is based not on the even sharing of the money among all teachers but differentially, to award effective teachers and to provide incentives for teachers to be effective throughout their careers.

That means that the career prospects for teachers are very much improved. In fact, one third of teachers can look forward to substantial pay increases under the offer and one third to significant pay increases—all on top of the pay awards normally negotiated each year. The heads will be able to expect an 18 per cent. increase on average in their pay if the offer is accepted.

How can these reforms—extra pay conditional upon acceptance by teachers of conditions of service and a new career structure and professional development — be negotiated? I am very ready to be convinced that the Remuneration of Teachers Act should be replaced. I would be willing to go to colleagues and to ask for legislative time if I could be convinced that there is an alternative to that statute that would enable the necessary negotiations to occur.

Bringing together the negotiations on pay and conditions is a constant proposal that is made to me, but I must remind the House that that is precisely what has occurred in Scotland. Scotland has a single forum where both pay and conditions are negotiated, yet that has not resulted in improvement. Machinery is not enough. There must be a will to negotiate. Then the machinery does not matter so much. Without the will to negotiate, it is not possible to arrive at the right negotiated answer——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Trafford Health Authority

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

10 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I am very glad to have this opportunity to raise an entirely local question that concerns my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd)—the future of the Trafford health authority.

I had an Adjournment debate on 25 April about the long-promised south Trafford district hospital — a promise that has been made over the years but which, for some reason known only to itself, the regional health authority has squashed. That decision has caused enormous aggravation in my constituency, and has been assailed from all sides and all political parties. My hon. Friend will guess that I am not altogether what is known as a member of the fan club for the officers of the regional health authority.

I criticised those officers for not sending a representative to put their case at a large public meeting held in Sale town hall. Many people turned up, but no one from the regional health authority bothered to show his face. Surely if the authority's case was a good one, its representatives would have attended the meeting. Its case has gone by default because of non-attendance.

At that time, I accused the RHA of lack of consultation, and I regret that that is the accusation that I make against it tonight. Its inept and inappropriate use of the consultation process has caused a great deal of anxiety among my constituents. On 22 October my health authority members had to fight off a cavalier and determined attempt by the chairman of the regional health authority to abolish the Trafford health authority. That arose because of a decision reached in February this year to reject the long-promised district hospital. It was determined that our future hospital needs would be met by developing services at Wythenshawe hospital—which is not in Trafford, but in Manchester — and by the rebuilding and improving of hospital facilities at two hospitals in Altrincham. That represented a change in policy.

Trafford health authority, quite rightly, asked the regional health authority to ensure that the management arrangements for Wythenshawe hospital were reviewed. I think that my hon. Friend the Minister would agree that that makes good sense. Under the change there will be increased use of Wythenshawe hospital by residents of Trafford. My health authority felt that the management of Wythenshawe should be transferred from the South Manchester health authority to the Trafford health authority.

A panel of five members of the RHA, including the chairman and the vice chairman, met on Friday 11 October to consider their response to the consultative document. The report was made public on 16 October and was to be put to the RHA on 22 October, less than a week later.

The report recommended the abolition of Trafford health authority, which was to be carved up and annexed to South Manchester health authority and Salford health authority. My hon. Friend has seen the report and will know that scant justification was offered for that recommendation, but unsubstantiated assertions were made about considerable savings and better health care for patients. I have to tell my hon. Friend that that did not go down well with my constituents.

From the time that the report was published I was bombarded with telephone calls and letters from angry constituents. I held an advice bureau in Altrincham town hall on 19 October, and two separate delegations came to see me. They comprised physiotherapists, speech therapists and chiropodists. They were all reasonable people and put their views sensibly, but they were worried about their jobs and lack of security. They were rightly angry. They were furious that there was less than a week between the publication of the report and the vital meeting of the regional health authority.

Because of the ham-handedness of those in charge of the regional health authority, unnecessary alarm and aggravation were caused. I am glad to say that when the meeting of the regional health authority took place on 22 October sanity prevailed and the majority of regional health authority members refused to accept the strong recommendation from their chairman that the proposal should be adopted. That was mainly due to the lobbying of every member of the regional health authority on the case for the Trafford health authority.

Had it not been for the vigilence of local organisations, and of the majority of the regional health authority members in vigorously and successfully opposing the move, the proposal by Sir John Page, the regional health authority chairman, could have resulted in chaos and confusion, such was his apparent lack of appreciation of how health and social services operate at a local level.

Without doubt, the regional health authority must constantly review the organisation of its services to ensure the most cost-effective means of providing health care. Nobody will dispute that, because it is one of the regional health authority's jobs. I have no argument with that, because in the long term it must be in the best interests of patients. However, it is equally essential that the regional health authority should act in a caring and competent manner. The standards that one would expect to be applied in a large public service organisation have been totally missing. The consultation process initiated by the regional health authority seemed to be excellent at the time, but many of my constituents will, cynically, believe that their views were treated with contempt and dismissed as being of no account.

The criteria selected by the regional health authority to judge the relative merits of the various options were misapplied, misconstrued or ignored. The criteria were the rules of the game and were based on formal DHSS guidelines. Not only were the rules changed half way through the game, but the goalposts were removed.

The benefits claimed for the proposal were given no substance. First, it was claimed that substantial savings would be made, but that claim has never been assessed in detail. There was never an intention to undertake a financial evaluation between the various options. Secondly, it was claimed that patients would benefit. That claim was so hollow that not a single concrete example could be offered in answer to the question: how will the changes benefit the people of Trafford?

The regional chairman apparently set great store by the good will on which the proposed arrangements would depend for their success. Good will follows in the wake

of trusted leadership. It is a mistake to expect good will in response to an imposed, unwarranted and unwanted solution.

The strength of feeling locally against the proposal and the manner in which it was presented is vividly illustrated in a remark by a member of the district health authority who met the regional chairman shortly before the meeting of the regional health authority. The member of the district health authority was attempting to understand the thought processes that led to the recommendation. She said:

"It is incredible that the health of the people of Trafford depends on such inept, perfunctory and arrogant decision making."

If my hon. Friend thinks that such language is intemperate — and I am sure that he is used to intemperate language, because he and I occasionally play bridge together and on occasions when I have trumped his ace his language has not been particularly mild—it is worth remembering that the proposal to eliminate an employing authority of 2,900 people was made public without advance warning to representatives of that authority a matter of only six days before a decision was due. It had not apparently occurred to anyone at the regional health authority that our health service staff, who give such dedicated and loyal care to those in need in the community, deserved similar consideration.

I have mentioned the enormous anger of people in my constituency. I would like to tell my hon. Friend that one of the Conservative councillors in my constituency called for the resignation of the chairman of the regional health authority. While I do not think that this is likely to happen, I hope that by now my hon. Friend has heard the message loud and clear, that the Sir John Page fan club is devoid of members in the Trafford area. Two enormous kicks in the stomach in one year are more than enough, and they certainly have not made him the pin-up boy of the people in my constituency.

The fact that the recommendation was overturned by the regional health authority, despite the most determined last-ditch stand of the chairman of the RHA, is the most welcome demonstration that the majority of its members have a clear grasp of the fundamental principles on which health care must be based, and of the vital importance of conterminosity between health authorities and local authorities. The regional health authority, however, has acknowledged that while Trafford health authority is regarded as sacrosanct, important organisational issues in Manchester and Trafford still need to be ironed out. I am concerned—and this is the reason for the debate tonight —that these issues are considered in a proper fashion.

I hope, therefore, that when my hon. Friend winds up the debate tonight, he will be able to assure me that the proper administrative processes will this time be observed when the regional health authority makes its assessment of these outstanding issues.

10.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am very happy to have this opportunity to respond to the powerful speech of my hon. Friend for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery). I know well how carefully and with what great concern he follows the issues of health service provision within his constituency and in the Trafford health authority in particular, and, of course, I am very concerned indeed to learn of the points that he made tonight, and dismayed by the tale that he had to tell. There are, of course, a number of points where I would, with respect, have to part company with my hon. Friend, but let met start with a point on which we can be in wholehearted agreement.

As I understand it, my hon. Friend said—I think that I quote him correctly—that the regional health authority must constanly review the organisation of its services to ensure the most cost-effective means of providing health care. That is the starting point for all of us. As my hon. Friend knows very well, the immense amount of public resources devoted to our health services — resources which are increasing in real terms and, since we came to office in 1979, on a national level—has increased by 20 per cent. in real terms. The north-west has had its share and, according to the RAWP formula, has been improving its share. So there we start in agreement.

My hon. Friend, however, was not entirely fair in some of his other remarks about the way in which the regional health authority has handled this undoubtedly difficult and very sensitive matter because, after all, it was required by the very criteria which my hon. Friend himself enunciated to look very carefully at the services that are provided and that are to be provided in the future. As part of that, it indulges in the consultation process. I cannot accept that the consultation process was in any way inept or inappropriate, to use my hon. Friend's words. It was an open consultative process, and was not conducted behind closed doors. I admit that it was conducted with due speed, but lengthy consultation is always much more difficult. Both the timetable and the method were entirely appropriate.

The particular consultation document was issued on 27 June 1985 with the request that comments on the proposals should be submitted by 27 September. To ensure that the bodies and individuals that were consulted were provided with as much information as possilbe, they were also informed in a letter of 6 August 1985 of the results of the option appraisal for the provision of mental illness services to the Trafford and south Manchester health districts, which had been approved by the regional health authority at its meeting on 18 June. As a result of that process a total of 308 bodies and individuals were consulted, and 46 responses were received, one third of which made no comments on the consultation document.

Thereafter, the consideration of the responses was undertaken by a special member panel which comprised the chairman and vice-chairman of the regional health authority, Mr. R. E. Hodd, Councillor Leck, and Councillor Mrs. Oldham. That process was duly undertaken in accordance with the normal consultation procedures, which are well laid down and established.

I must stress that consultation in itself is not a referendum. The consultation process exists better to inform the decision-makers, and the exercise greatly assisted Trafford. I know that Trafford wanted to make a special presentation of its case, but that is impractical and would have been unfair to other interested bodies with views. Instead, an assistant general manager held detailed discussions with Trafford and south Manchester to ascertain any special points that they wished to make. They were reported fully to the RHA panel set up to consider the matter. A Trafford health authority delegation met the chairman of the regional health authority, Sir John

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

Page, before the full regional health authority considered the panel's report. Having considered it, they reported to the full authority about three weeks ago.

Trafford's claim that the management of Wythenshawe should pass to it was considered in detail. Trafford argued in a detailed submission that more of south Trafford's residents used the hospital than residents of any other area and, therefore, Trafford should manage the hospital. However, the regional health authority found that, although south Trafford people might form the largest single block, most of the Wythenshawe users—60 per cent.—came from elsewhere. It was felt, therefore, that the case was not proven. The regional health authority decided to maintain the status quo in managing Wythenshawe, that is, to quote the consultation document, "that Wythenshawe Hospital, when developed to provide facilities for South Trafford, would continue to be managed by South Manchester Health Authority".

The great concern centred on the other suggestion before the RHA. The panel asked the region to consider transferring the management of south Trafford to south Manchester, and north Trafford to Salford. It foresaw substantial savings and the prospect of other management efficiencies without any deterioration in services, which it believed would benefit patients. However, as my hon. Friend told the House, those options were not accepted and, therefore, are no longer on the table. It is entirely right that they should be considered precisely in the spirit of the doctrine that I quoted, and on which my hon. Friend and I seemed to be in agreement.

As I say, it is recognised that there should always be full local consultation at any stage in any of these issues. If, for example, later on there were to be proposals to change any health authority boundaries, those district health authorities concerned would certainly be given a full opportunity to put forward their views. If, following such consultation, the regional health authority wished to go ahead with boundary changes, the matter would come for final decision to the Secretary of State. If the Secretary of State agreed, statutory instruments would be needed to implement any such proposals. The Secretary of State would have his own separate consultation and those concerned would again have the opportunity to put forward their views before the instruments were laid.

This is all entirely speculative, because no such proposals are being made. What I should like to stress to my hon. Friend, and I would be grateful if he would pass it on to his constituents and the health authority concerned, is that built into all out actions there is a wide allowance for the maximum degree of consultation. I know that my hon. Friend accepts that the proposals that gave him and his constituents concern are no longer on the table.

I hope that my hon. Friend will recognise his good fortune in having the Trafford health authority, because it is one of the highest funded districts per head in the north-west region. This year the Trafford district will be 15·23 per cent. above its resource allocation working party target. That is as far above the RAWP target as other districts such as Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde and Bolton are below it. More importantly for the man in the street, because these RAWP calculations are of an abstruse nature known only to hon. Members and Health Ministers, is the fact that the residents of Trafford find it easier to get into hospital as inpatients than do most other people in the north-west region.

I hope that my hon. Friend recognises that the provision of health services in the Trafford region is of a high standard. We certainly pay tribute to that and to the good service given to us by the workers at all levels in the health authority to which my hon. Friend referred. At no time was there any question of a threat to the jobs of the 2,900 people to whom he referred. The only thing at issue was the authority staff. None of that came to pass. As I understand it, the health services themselves were not under threat; the issue was the organisation of the health authority. I should like to pay my own tribute to the contribution made by workers in the health authority in Trafford and in health authorities elsewhere.

I should like to remind my hon. Friend of the good work that has been carried out in the north-west region as a whole. Some of the statistics and figures in the latest report of the north-western health region will, I am sure, be familiar to him, but they deserve wide publicity and recognition to show what that region as a whole has achieved in recent years. We have seen a steady rise in the number of people receiving hospital treatment, and between 1978 and 1983 for example, the number of inpatients admitted to hospital increased by something like 14 per cent. from 511,000 to 585,000.

The number of outpatients increased by 11 per cent. from 3·1 million to 3·4 million. The number of day cases shot up, showing a rise over that same period of 53 per cent. Those figures indicate a well-run region. The skills and dedication that they reveal have also been applied in the administration of health care in the Trafford health authority.

I hope that the flurry that has been caused by the affair will now subside. I hope that the sincerity and integrity of the consultation process will be accepted, because it was certainly genuine and in all these cases it will always be followed. But at the end of the day we come back to the starting point at which my hon. Friend also began. The regional health authority—and, indeed, the district, and the DHSS, for that matter—all have a duty constantly to review the organisation of our health services. That is what is happening, that is what we shall continue to do at national level, and I hope that that will continue to be the yardstick by which the region and the Trafford health authority conduct their affairs. It is only in that way that we can continue to make the progress that we are now making in revitalising the health services in Trafford, in the north-west and in the country as a whole.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-five minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 12 November 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

NEW WRIT

For Tyne Bridge, in the room of Harry Lowes Cowans, Esquire, deceased.—*[Mr. Foster.]*

AUTUMN STATEMENT 1985

Ordered,

That a copy of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement 1985 be laid before the House.—*[The Chancellor of the Exchequer.]*

Mr. Speaker: I call the First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means to move the eight motions in his name.

CLOSURE OF DEBATE UNDER STANDING ORDER No. 31

Return ordered,

respecting applications of Standing Order No. 31 (Closure of debate) during Session 1984-85, (1) in the House and in Committee of the whole House, under the following heads:—

1	2	3	4	5	6
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Question before House or Committee when claimed	Whether in House or Committee	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Assent withheld because, in the opinion of the Chair, a decision would shortly be arrived at without that Motion	Result of Motion and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

and (2) in the Standing Committees under the following heads:—

1	2	3	4	5
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Question before Committee when claimed	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Assent withheld because, in the opinion of the Chair, a decision would shortly be arrived at without that Motion	Result of Motion and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Return ordered,

of the number of Instruments considered in Session 1984-85 by the Joint Committee and the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments respectively pursuant to their orders of reference, showing in each case the numbers of Instruments subject to the different forms of parliamentary procedure and of those within the Committees' orders of reference for which no parliamentary procedure is prescribed by statute, and the numbers drawn to the special attention of the House or of both Houses distinguishing the ground in the Committees' orders of reference upon which such attention was invited; and of the numbers of Instruments considered by a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c., and by the House respectively, in Session 1984-85, showing the number where the question on the proceedings relating thereto was put forthwith under Standing Order No. 79(5).—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

PRIVATE BILLS AND PRIVATE BUSINESS

Return ordered,

of the number of Private Bills, Hybrid Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders introduced into this House and brought from the House of Lords, and of Acts passed in Session 1984-85;

Of all Private Bills, Hybrid Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders which in Session 1984-85 were reported on by Committees on Opposed Bills or by Committees nominated partly by the House and partly by the Committee of Selection, together with the names of the selected Members who served on each Committee; the first and also the last day of the sitting of each Committee; the number of days on which each Committee sat; the number of days on which each selected Member served; the number of days occupied by each Bill in Committee; the Bills of which the Preambles were reported to have been proved; the Bills of which the Preambles were reported to have been not proved; and, in the case of Bills for confirming Provisional Orders, whether the Provisional Order ought or ought not to be confirmed;

Of all Private Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders which in Session 1984-85 were referred by the Committee of Selection to the Committee on Unopposed Bills, together with

the names of the Members who served on the Committee; the number of days on which the Committee sat; and the number of days on which each Member attended;

And of the number of Private Bills, Hybrid Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders withdrawn or not proceeded with by the parties, those Bills being specified which were referred to Committees and dropped during the sittings of the Committee.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

PUBLIC BILLS

Return ordered,

of the number of Public Bills distinguishing Government from other Bills, introduced into this House, or brought from the House of Lords, during Session 1984-85 showing:

(1) the number which received the Royal Assent, and

(2) the number which did not receive the Royal Assent, indicating those which were introduced into but not passed by this House, those passed by this House but not by the House of Lords, those passed by the House of Lords but not by this House, those passed by both Houses but Amendments not agreed to; and distinguishing the stages at which such Bills were dropped, postponed or rejected in either House of Parliament, or the stages which such Bills had reached by the time of Prorogation.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

SELECT COMMITTEES

Return ordered,

of Select Committees, except Business Committees, in Session 1984-85, with the Sub-Committees appointed by them; the number of the meetings of each and the number of meetings each Member attended; and the number of Members who served on Select Committees; together with the total cost (estimated where necessary) in respect of each Select Committee and Sub-Committee for the financial year 1984-85 of:—the attendance of witnesses; overseas visits; visits within the United Kingdom; specialist advisers' remuneration and expenses respectively, and other work commissioned; entertainment; the preparation for publication of the Minutes of Evidence; and printing and publishing; with so much of the same information as is relevant to the Chairmen's Panel and the Court of Referees.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Return ordered,

of the days on which the House sat in Session 1984-85 stating for each day the day of the month and day of the week, the hour of the meeting, and the hour of the adjournment; and the total number of hours occupied in the sittings of the House, and the average time; and showing the number of hours on which the House sat each day, and the number of hours after the time appointed for the interruption of business.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

STANDING COMMITTEES

Return ordered,

for Session 1984-85, of (1) the total number and the names of all Members (including and distinguishing Chairmen) who have been appointed to serve on one or more of the Standing Committees showing, with regard to each of such Members, the number of sittings to which he was summoned and at which he was present; (2) the number of Bills, Estimates, Matters and other items referred to Standing Committees pursuant to Standing Order No. 79 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.) or Standing Order No. 80 (Standing Committees on European Community documents) considered by all and by each of the Standing Committees, the number of sittings of each Committee and the titles of all Bills, Estimates, Matters and other items as above considered by a Committee, distinguishing where a Bill was a Government Bill or was brought from the House of Lords, and showing in the case of each Bill, Estimate, Matter and other item, the particular Committee by which it was considered, the number of sittings at which it was considered and the number of Members present at each of those sittings.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

SPECIAL PROCEDURE ORDERS

Return ordered,

of the number of Special Procedure Orders presented in Session 1984-85; the number withdrawn; the number annulled; the number against which Petitions or copies of Petitions were deposited; the number of Petitions of General Objection and for Amendment respectively considered by the Chairmen; the number of such Petitions certified by the Chairmen as proper to be received, and the number certified by them as being Petitions of General Objection and for Amendment respectively; the number referred to a Joint Committee of both Houses; the number reported with Amendments by a Joint Committee, and the number in relation to which a Joint Committee reported that the Order be not approved and be amended respectively; and the number of Bills introduced for the confirmation of Special Procedure Orders;

Of Special Procedure Orders which, in Session 1984-85, were referred to a Joint Committee, together with the names of the Commons Members who served on each Committee; the number of days on which each Committee sat; and the number of days on which each such Member attended.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

1. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the representations he has received on the Green Paper on social security dealt with housing benefit.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): About 2,300, Sir.

Mr. McCrindle: Does my hon. Friend accept that the Green Paper proposals on housing benefit could lead to the withdrawal of housing benefit not only from many people who are on very small occupational pensions but from their widows? Does he agree that that would be a disincentive to thrift and that that is hardly the best background against which to sponsor the expansion of occupational pension schemes?

Mr. Newton: I hope my hon. Friend recognises that the effect of the structural proposals in the Green Paper depends upon the final decisions that are taken and the rates that are set within whatever structure may be proposed, including income support rates. We shall endeavour to ensure that we produce a fair position, but we have to take account of the fact that the purpose of encouraging the development of occupational pensions is to reduce, in the long run, people's dependence on means-tested benefits.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Will the Minister take any account at all of the representations that he receives?

Mr. Newton: I hope the hon. Gentleman will accept that the only real answer I can give to him is wait and see. However, we are studying very carefully what he has said. If he has any representations that he would like to make to me beyond those that he has already made, I shall look at them with unusual care.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that many pensioners who now receive housing

benefit would not need to do so if the value of their savings had not been destroyed by inflation because of the policies of profligate Socialist Governments in the late 1970s?

Mr. Newton: I endorse my hon. Friend's every word.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Minister accept that suffering over housing benefit is being experienced by those in receipt of small occupational pensions and by widows? Does he also accept that the proposal to make a contribution towards rates is deeply worrying and distressing to many people who come within these income groups? Has he received many such representations, and will he consider them very carefully in the context of the White Paper?

Mr. Newton: We shall consider all the representations that are made to us, but part of the rates problem is due to the irresponsibility of local authorities, which are conscious that very large numbers of their electorate do not pay rates.

Mr. Pawsey: Can my hon. Friend say what is the current cost of housing benefit and what was its equivalent in 1979? Does he believe that this is a cost-effective way of delivering benefit to those in need?

Mr. Newton: The housing benefit scheme can be a more cost-effective and fairer way of helping those in need. We took an important step towards that by bringing together the two systems of help with housing costs in 1982 and 1983, but that is a system upon which we can improve, and we are seeking to do so.

Mr. Meacher: Will the Minister confirm that, under his housing benefit cuts, there will be 7 million losers, 4 million of whom will be pensioners, mostly owner-occupiers with small occupational pensions? Will the hon. Gentleman now answer the question that he has signally failed to answer: how do the Government justify their view that pensioners who are widows should now be deprived of housing benefit simply because their husbands were thrifty enough in their lifetime to save for a small private pension?

Mr. Newton: The outcome of the review obviously depends on the rates that are set and the final decision on the structure. We must bear in mind that one of the main burdens of the people to whom the hon. Gentleman has referred is, apart from the catastrophic rate of inflation over which the Labour Government presided, the extent to which this group is paying taxation. One of our objectives is to reduce the tax burden. I believe that it would be far better to leave widows and others with their own money in their own pockets than to take it from them and return it in the form of means-tested benefits.

Hospital Waiting Lists

2. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on action being taken to reduce hospital waiting lists in East Anglia.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): The latest figures from the East Anglian region show that, in the 12 months to 30 September 1985, there was a reduction in the inpatient waiting list of 12 per cent. During 1984 the number of inpatient cases treated in the region increased by 4 per cent. The regional health authority is continuing to take urgent action to reduce waiting lists and waiting times still further.

Mr. Thompson: I thank my hon. Friend for that encouraging reply. Is he aware that, although the numbers being treated are increasing and the numbers on waiting lists are coming down, far too many people are still on waiting lists for orthopaedic surgery, especially in the Norwich area? Will my hon. Friend do what he can to expedite the appointment of an extra consultant and to bring forward plans for a second acute hospital for the Norwich area?

Mr. Whitney: I certainly recognise that point. I understand that during the next financial year a new orthopaedic surgeon for the Norwich area will be appointed.

Mr. Tom Cox *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This question is about East Anglia.

Mr. Cox: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that this matter is of concern not just to the Norwich area? Is he further aware that in the Peterborough area——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is just the point.

Mr. Dobson: I think, Mr. Speaker, that Peterborough is in the East Anglia area.

The Under-Secretary of State may be pleased with the improvements in hospital waiting lists in East Anglia, but can he confirm that in half of the districts in East Anglia — Cambridge, West Suffolk, West Norfolk and Huntingdon—waiting lists have increased in the last six months? Is it not a fact that in Norwich — the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) is so proud of the improvements there—of 263 women waiting for urgent gynaecological treatment, 224 have been waiting for more than a month?

Mr. Whitney: If the hon. Gentleman consults the details put out by the East Anglia regional health authority, he will see that there has been a significant improvement. Of course, that improvement has been patchy. The regions recognise the need to concentrate on the weaker areas, and that is what they are doing. They have taken a number of steps following consultations with my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), who previously occupied my post, to ensure that those improvements are put in hand.

Mr. Powley: Does my hon. Friend welcome, as I do, the appointment of a district general manager to the Norwich health authority and other district general managers in the East Anglia area? Does he agree that those appointments will undoubtedly secure the more efficient running of all the health authorities in East Anglia, and in other parts of Britain, which will result in a shortening of waiting lists and more efficient management of all the resources of the East Anglia health services?

Mr. Whitney: I am happy to agree with my hon. Friend. The post-Griffiths management structure, which is now being put into place, will show a remarkable return in terms of patient care for the significant increase in real spending that has been put into the NHS.

Limited List Prescribing

3. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on the operation of the limited list for prescribing drugs under the National Health Service.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): The selected list scheme has been in operation since 1 April, and the scheme is running successfully.

Mr. Latham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that I am still receiving letters from constituents and their general practitioners complaining that they cannot get the drug that they need and saying that the National Health Service substitute is not satisfactory? Will he have another go at trying to persuade the British Medical Association to agree to a local appeal procedure?

Mr. Fowler: All the evidence that we have shows that the scheme has settled down. As my hon. Friend will be aware, we put forward proposals for an appeal mechanism for doctors. They were rejected by the General Medical Services Committee, which put forward no alternative. I shall, of course, bear in mind what my hon. Friend has said, but, on present evidence, I am not sure that any further action is required.

Dr. Roger Thomas: How many drugs has the Secretary of State allowed to be included on the limited list for each month since April 1985? What has been the reduction in the amount of savings expected? I appeal to him, once more, to place the new mucolytic drugs on the list.

Mr. Fowler: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the detailed information that he requires. In general, we thought the savings on the drugs bill would be about £75 million a year, and that has proved to be the case. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that mucolytics were studied by the independent review committee. That committee made recommendations on two matters, but, in general, it said that they had no proven general therapeutic value in the treatment of chest conditions. We have accepted its independent advice.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that to achieve continued improved patient care it is essential that we have an efficient and effective use of resources, such as the long overdue introduction of the limited list scheme?

Mr. Fowler: Yes. The scheme has proved to be a sensible way of saving money on the drugs bill and ensuring that extra resources go on the health services. The Government have sought to use the resources available to the National Health Service to the best effect. One of the results is that the NHS is now treating more patients that than at any time in its history.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Why does the Secretary of State allow the GMSC unilaterally to prevent other doctors from using the appeal procedure? Will he implement his offer to the doctors to allow those general practitioners who wish to prescribe by the appeal system to do so?

Mr. Fowler: In view of the history of the selected list and the controversy that it aroused in the medical profession, it seems rather foolhardy to seek to impose an appeal mechanism on the medical profession, which does not appear to want it.

Mr. Boyes: The Opposition said that the limited list would be a disaster, and that was an understatement. It is causing grave anxiety to patients, constituents and doctors. The Minister keeps saying that the list is working. Why does the lady at the other end of this Corridor keep sending letters to me saying that the Minister cannot reply to the complaints in less than three months because he is receiving too many letters about them? How can it be working in that case?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman talks about statements that I have made. He has made a complete misstatement of the position. Despite early controversy, the selected list has settled down, is working well and is producing sensible savings for the Health Service. I should have thought that that is what the hon. Gentleman would want to see.

Mr. Favell: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many general practitioners are delighted with the new selected list because they now find that the patients of their weak kneed brethren are no longer doing the prescribing? Instead, those doctors are prescribing the most cost-effective drugs.

Mr. Fowler: Opinion inside the medical profession on this issue has undoubtedly changed. Another benefit has been that some drug prices have come down appreciably as a result of the policy. Again, I should have thought that that was something that hon. Members on both sides of the House would want to see.

Mr. Pavitt: How many members of the limited list advisory and monitoring committee still have financial interests in the manufacture of drugs being prescribed? Is the Secretary of State satisfied that, with the number of members who have a financial interest, he is receiving disinterested advice?

Mr. Fowler: I am satisfied that it is an independent committee and that the advice being given is entirely disinterested and independent. I would not have set up the committee in any other way.

Contraception

4. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now issue fresh guidelines to doctors regarding the prescription of oral contraceptives to girls below the age of consent.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): The existing guidance is being reviewed, taking into account the detail of the House of Lords judgment and the wide range of views expressed on this issue.

Mr. Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the recent narrow Law Lords decision is highly damaging to family relationships and that it has virtually abolished the age of consent? It means that a few doctors will shell out the pill like jelly babies to very young girls. Will he issue guidelines seeking to restore the status quo ante the Law Lords decision?

Mr. Hayhoe: I do not accept the exaggerated comments of my hon. Friend. His comment about jelly babies is a slur upon the medical profession and upon others involved. As I have said, the existing guidance is being reviewed, taking acount of the Law Lords judgment and of other views that have been expressed.

Mrs. Renée Short: Is the Minister aware that the BMA has already issued careful guidance on this matter to all its members? We have no reason to doubt that the members of the BMA are adhering to that guidance. Bearing in mind that the overwhelming majority of girls who seek help from their general practitioner are already in a relationship, is it not better that they should get advice about how to avoid unwanted pregnancies, rather than bring into the world children they do not want and with whom they canot cope?

Mr. Hayhoe: The fact that the existing guidance stresses the quite exceptional circumstances in which doctors or family planning clinics should act in the way described underlines the importance of obtaining parental consent whenever possible. I found considerable support for the five Fraser points, if I may so describe them, contained in the House of Lords judgment. I hope that they will be reflected in the revised guidance that will follow the review.

Dame Jill Knight: Will my right hon. Friend resist what some may see as an automatic next step following the Law Lords decision—namely, a lowering of the age of consent? Will he bear in mind that young girls are just as much, if not more, in danger today than they were in Victorian times when the law came into effect?

Mr. Hayhoe: Questions about the age of consent are for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. I know of no proposal whatever to seek changes in the law to that effect. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will be concerned to see that the figures show that there were more than 4,000 abortions for girls under 16 in 1984, and equally concerned to see from the figures of the family planning clinics that 17,000 girls received advice and help, some without parental consent. Both those figures should generate concern on both sides of the House.

Hospital Hygiene

5. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any proposals to seek to improve hygiene in hospitals.

Mr. Hayhoe: In view of the importance of hospitals maintaining a good standard of hygiene, I have called for urgent action by health authorities concerned in response to recent criticisms of hospital kitchens. The scope for further measures is under urgent consideration.

Mr. Alton: I am grateful to the Minister for that reply. Given that 10 per cent. of patients acquire infectious diseases while resident in hospital, and in view of recent critical reports of wards and hospital kitchens, does the Minister not think that it is time hospitals were excluded from the exemption from prosecution which they currently enjoy?

Mr. Hayhoe: I certainly recognise the concern of those who pick up infections in hospital. The first priority must be to take action to deal with dirty, bug-infested kitchens or other areas in hospitals. As I have indicated, the matter of Crown immunity is being considered.

Mr. Cash: In view of the recent experience of legionnaire's disease in Stafford, and now again in Glasgow, will my right hon. Friend assure me that proper measures are being taken to ensure that matters of this kind are adequately covered in future?

Mr. Hayhoe: Guidance has already been issued concerning legionnaire's disease. I think that the whole House would wish to express its concern and sympathy and condolences to the relatives of those who have been affected by the outbreak in Glasgow. This is a matter primarily for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Minister aware that surveys show that 60 per cent. of National Health Service hospitals have food hygiene standards below the Government's food hygiene regulations, and that 16 per cent. would warrant prosecution were it not for Crown immunity? When I took a deputation to the Minister recently asking for the abolition of Crown immunity, I gained the impression, rightly or wrongly, that he was deterred by the financial considerations. Has the Minister made any costing of the abolition of Crown immunity? If so, what costing has he made?

Mr. Hayhoe: The right hon. Gentleman must have come to the meeting with his delegation already under that impression, because nothing that I said to him when we met at the House a while ago could have sustained such an impression in his mind. I have indicated that matters connected with Crown immunity are under consideration. A general change in Crown immunity would require primary legislation.

Mr. Stern: Will my right hon. Friend reject the big bang theory that would be involved in the abolition of Crown immunity, and at the same time provide opportunities for those in charge of hospitals and other public buildings to reassure the public of the generally very high standards of hygiene that currently exist?

Mr. Hayhoe: That would generally be true. I repeat that Crown immunity should not and must not be used by those responsible for deferring or postponing action to deal with unhygienic conditions.

Mr. Craigen: With the further deaths in Glasgow from legionnaire's disease, how closely is the Minister working with his colleagues in Scotland and Wales to combat this insidious problem?

Mr. Hayhoe: As I think the hon. Gentleman knows, there is an inquiry into the whole matter. That inquiry, which has already produced an interim report, will be looking very carefully at any lessons that can be learnt from the unfortunate and tragic occurrence in Glasgow.

Resource Allocation

6. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what basis of population statistics is used for the calculation of allocation of resources to regional health authorities.

Mr. Hayhoe: Resources are allocated to regional health authorities using broadly the methods recommended by the resource allocations working party. However, the basis of population statistics has been revised and from 1985-86 onwards allocations are calculated on the basis of population projections for the year of allocation, rather than on the population estimates for past years as recommended by the working party. This new approach is thus more sensitive to the needs of regions with rapidly growing or declining populations.

Mr. Freeman: I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend for his answer. It will be good news to growing regions, such as the Oxford health region, in which my constituency, Kettering, lies.

Will my right hon. Friend undertake to look at the morbidity rates which are used in the RAWP formula for the allocation of resources between the different regions of the country?

Mr. Hayhoe: I gladly give that undertaking, and with my Treasury experience behind me, I add "with no commitment."

Mr. Loyden: In addition to the criteria that the Minister uses in terms of population, what consideration is being given to the incidence of diseases in certain regions, particularly those with high unemployment and poverty?

Mr. Hayhoe: There are several complicated matters of which account is taken in the allocation of resources. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman, giving him full details.

Mr. Kennedy: Is the Minister basically satisfied that the RAWP formula can work at a time of economic recession, which the National Health Service is having to shoulder?

Mr. Hayhoe: "Recession" is a curious word to use when, over the lifetime of the Government, there has been a growth in resources in real terms of over 20 per cent.

Sick Pay

7. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the minimum hours and earnings threshold for entitlement to statutory sick pay.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): The earnings threshold for entitlement to statutory sick pay is the same as that governing liability to pay national insurance contributions, currently £35·50 a week. There is no qualifying rule about a minimum number of hours.

Mr. Taylor: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his first appearance on the Front Bench to answer questions. I thank him for his reply. Can he comment on the circumstances of an older employee in my constituency on £35 per week, but with some savings, who finds himself ineligible either for unemployment benefit or for sickness pay?

Mr. Major: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind words. In the case of the man that he mentioned, if his earnings are below £35.50 he will have no entitlement to statutory sick pay. He may, of course, have an entitlement to sickness benefit, which would depend on his previous national insurance contributions. If, however, he falls outside statutory sick pay and state sickness benefit, he may have a residual entitlement to supplementary benefit.

"Reform of Social Security"

8. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received regarding his Green Paper "Reform of Social Security."

Mr. Fowler: Over 7,000, Sir.

Mr. Yeo: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the arguments for reforming the social security system, that is the need to simplify it and to make it more cost-effective, are just as strong today as they were when he commenced his reviews 18 months ago? Accordingly, will he undertake not to be dissuaded from achieving those twin objectives in the forthcoming White Paper by the representations that he may have received?

Mr. Fowler: Indeed, in the responses to the consultative paper very few people are saying that social security should not be reformed. The question is not whether, but how, it should be reformed. We have set out our proposals in the Green Paper. We look forward at some stage to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who leads for the Opposition, having the courage to set out his proposals.

Mr. Pike: Can the Secretary of State give the House the assurance that he will take note of the representations from people, particularly women and manual workers, who feel that they will suffer considerably when SERPS is either phased out or abolished? They are the people who stand to lose most. Will he give an assurance that he will safeguard their position?

Mr. Fowler: I certainly give the assurance that I will consider the responses on the state earnings-related pension scheme, but again the hon. Gentleman has to accept that, with the exception of the eccentric hon. Member for Oldham, West, virtually no one outside the House says that SERPS should stay as it is at the moment.

Sir William Clarke: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the main danger to private pension schemes would arise if, in the future, the investment in pension funds were directed into a national investment bank? Would that not jeopardise the millions of private pensioners? Surely that must lead to the conclusion that under no circumstances must the Labour party be allowed to implement that policy.

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The policy put forward by the Labour party on a national investment bank and on pensions is totally against the interests of occupational pensioners. The message should go out that those proposals would damage occupational pensions and the interests of occupational pensioners.

Mr. Hugh Brown: In the light of the volume and content of the representations so far received, when the Government produce their White Paper, will one option be to reconsider the whole process until they have a mandate from electors?

Mr. Fowler: We shall put forward the proposals in the White Paper on the basis of what is set out in the Green Paper and the result of the consultation process. It is right to consult the public on the proposals, but we also believe strongly that now is the time to take action on reforming social security.

Mr. Colvin: Does my right hon. Friend acknowledge, as Lord Beveridge did, the value of voluntary organisations working within the welfare state to provide services for those in need? Will he give serious consideration to continuing the "Opportunities for the Volunteering" scheme when it expires at the end of next March?

Mr. Fowler: That has been a successful scheme. I shall want to consider it in the light of its success and of what my hon. Friend has said.

Mrs. Beckett: Will the Secretary of State confirm that among the many representations that he has received, some of the greatest concern has been expressed at his proposals for the social fund, which—in demanding that his staff choose whom they will help from many who have proven need—not only put his staff in the firing line, but return us straight to the Victorian concept of the deserving and undeserving poor?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Lady is entirely wrong about that. She should read what the Social Security Advisory Committee says about that in its entirety. As I think the hon. Lady understands, the present supplementary benefit system, which employs about 40,000 staff trying to administer it, is in danger of breaking down because of the organisation and structure of supplementary benefit. We have proposed a sensible way forward, which enables the position of individual claimants to be better and properly considered.

Economic Deprivation

9. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take in regard to alleviating poorer people's economic deprivation in the near future.

Mr. Major: The Government are pledged to protect the retirement pension and associated long-term benefits against rising prices, and have successfully done so. Ultimately, however, improvements in living standards depend upon economic growth and the control of inflation.

Mr. Thorne: Does not imposing additional charges, partly through rates and mortgages, on those in receipt of supplementary benefit create further hardship for those who are already deprived?

Mr. Major: We believe that ultimately the best way to deal with these matters is to put money in people's pockets so that they may meet the charges. The hon. Gentleman picks a curious time to raise that criticism. He will be aware that a substantial uprating of benefits of around 7 per cent. is taking effect later this month.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree that the object of the review of social security is to ensure that benefits go to those most in need, and that the success of the review will be judged against that criterion?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend is right. The White Paper which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will introduce shortly will set out the system which, we believe, will direct resources to those who most need them. I think that that will be a welcome innovation.

Mr. Alfred Morris: The Secretary of State was studiedly uncommunicative yesterday, as he has been today, about his detailed intentions for the future of SERPS. Can the Minister give a categorical assurance that there is no intention of amending SERPS so as to drop the rule under which every individual's pension is based on his or her best 20 years' earnings? Is he aware of the importance of that rule to very large numbers of severely disabled people and of the concern about its future among the organisations of the disabled?

Mr. Major: The right hon. Gentleman says that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was uncommunicative yesterday. That may or may not have been so, but I have nothing to add to what he said.

Board and Lodging Allowance

10. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on board and lodging allowances for under-25-year-olds.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in his speech to the House yesterday.

Mr. Favell: Will my hon. Friend remind the House of the amount of the allowance? Will he tell the House what happens when a young person on the allowance finds a job, which he reports to the social security office?

Mr. Newton: The current limits on board and lodging payments range from £45 a week in some areas to £70 a week in others, to which must be added the personal expenses allowance of just under £10. The plain fact is, I am afraid, that that means that large numbers of young people could not afford to pay for the same accommodation if they were in work, which is thoroughly unsatisfactory and one reason why we have taken action.

Mr. Frank Field: Does the Minister recall that it was a constituent of mine who took the Government to court, when the old regulations were ruled unlawful? As experts have already commented that the new regulations will probably meet a similar fate, will the Government withdraw them and come back to the House with primary legislation?

Mr. Newton: I see no reason to withdraw the regulations that have just been laid, because, as I understand it, they meet exactly the points that were raised in the High Court case. The basis of that court case was that the board and lodging limits and the time limits, had they been specified in the regulations, would have been lawful. That is the basis on which we have acted.

Mr. Fletcher: Is my hon. Friend aware that his swift action in investigating severe overcrowding and allegations of lodging allowance fraud in Edinburgh has been warmly welcomed by my constituents? Would it not be helpful to the recipients of lodging allowances and the taxpayer, as well as eliminating racketeering, Rachman-like landlords, if a simple form of local licensing were introduced for the premises concerned?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will understand that I cannot speak so readily for the position in Scotland, but local authorities in England and Wales have power to take steps to license houses in multiple occupation, and we encourage them to use that power. The point that concerns me is that we must ensure that the social security system does not virtually encourage the kind of exploitation and abuse about which he is rightly concerned.

Mr. Meacher: Will the Minister recognise that it is wholly invidious to expect Members of Parliament to vote on new board and lodging regulations which are now effectively sub judice? Is it not also improper for the Government to try to presume upon the decision of the Court of Appeal, especially since they have twice now been forced to back down because of illegalities? Will he

say why the Secretary of State is so obsessed with pursuing tiny amounts of alleged board and lodging fraud, which he then fails to prosecute, when at the same time the Government are so lenient about tax fraud, now running on a scale at least 100 times greater?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is doing both himself and his party a disservice in talking about tiny amounts of fraud, when it has been discovered in one of our local offices that over half those claiming benefit were not resident at the address for which they were claiming. If that is to be the approach of the Opposition, heaven help the social security bill which they will face if they ever get the chance to run the system.

Local Community Hospitals

11. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on Government policy towards local community hospitals.

Mr. Whitney: Community hospitals make an important contribution to the National Health Service. Their place in the pattern of district services is primarily a matter for health authorities to decide, in consultation with others concerned at local level, including the public and medical practitioners.

Mr. Jessel: Will my hon. Friend look sympathetically at the need to retain St. Mary's hospital, Hampton?

Mr. Whitney: I recognise my hon. Friend's concern. I understand that the plans of the district health authority point to the possible closure of St. Mary's at some time in the next 10 years. I can assure my hon. Friend that, before any final decision is made, full cognisance will be taken of local opinion.

Mr. Steel: Will the Minister accept the need for a little more enthusiasm towards local community hospitals? Do they not provide excellent value for money and should he not be so financing the health boards that they are able to keep these hospitals open?

Mr. Whitney: We certainly accept the contribution that community hospitals make, but decisions of the effective deployment of local health services, including community hospitals, must be a matter in the first instance for the local health authority.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Before the hon. Gentleman makes rash promises about local community hospitals, will he ensure that all hospitals are fully equipped to deal with situations that need to be dealth with?

Mr. Whitney: The 20 per cent. increase in real terms in resources allocated to the National Health Service since we came to power means a steady improvement in the quality of service and equipment in our HNS hospitals.

Drug Prescriptions

12. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek reductions in the quantity of drugs prescribed by doctors.

Mr. Hayhoe: With the support of the British Medical Association, doctors are already encouraged to restrict the amount they prescribe on any one occasion, in the interests of both economy and safety. There is no evidence that amounts prescribed are generally excessive, but, following the recent successful conference on prescribing, ways in which doctors may be further encouraged to prescribe both economically and effectively are being explored with representatives of the profession.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Now that my right hon. Friend has restricted the range of drugs prescribed, will he look for the much greater savings to be made from reducing the huge quantity of drugs in circulation? Is he aware that hundreds of millions of pounds' worth of drugs a year are thrown away or wasted? Will he tell the House what practical steps he will take to make some doctors reform their wasteful prescribing habits?

Mr. Hayhoe: The prescribing habits of doctors are monitored, and the family practitioner committees have the power to go to those doctors who appear to be prescribing excessively and discuss the matter with them.

Blood Plasma

13. **Mr. Shersby** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to ensure that the United Kingdom is self-sufficient in the supply of blood plasma.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Government are already committed to achieving self-sufficiency in blood products. When the new plant at Elstree is fully commissioned by the end of 1986, the Department will ensure that regions collect enough blood plasma to achieve this.

Mr. Shersby: That reply will be warmly welcomed. However, what steps is my hon. Friend taking to encourage further blood donors to give their services?

Mr. Hayhoe: The fact of my hon. Friend having raised the matter today—which I endorse—will, we hope, help to encourage as many people as possible to come forward to offer their blood to the transfusion service.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today. I was present at Victoria station to meet the Emir of Qatar at the start of his state visit to this country, and this evening I shall attend the state banquet given by Her Majesty the Queen in honour of the Emir of Qatar.

Mr. Kennedy: Given the welcome news this morning that Lord Davidson, in the Court of Session in Edinburgh, ruled that the assets of the Trustee Savings Bank are indeed the property of the Scottish depositors, and given that my noble Friend Lord Taylor successfully moved an amendment to the Trustee Savings Banks Bill in another place on behalf of the alliance, seeking to protect those and other interests, will the Prime Minister confirm that the Government, in the light of that ruling, will not now seek to introduce any orders to name a vesting day?

The Prime Minister: We shall be considering the judgment very careful indeed, and will make a statement when we have done so.

Mr. Silvester: Is it not depressing that students at Manchester university should have attacked and abused the Minister of State, Home Office, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington)? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is about time that people inside and outside universities stood up to be counted on whether they are prepared to defend the right of free speech?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. Universities are places where, above all, free speech should be honoured, not prevented.

Mr. Steel: Reverting to Lord Davidson's judgment, may I ask the Prime Minister to give an assurance that, in her determination to press ahead with the privatisation programme, she will seek to sell only those items to which she has a valid title? Will she also undertake, in reviewing the judgment, to abandon the attempt to deprive the depositors of the TSB of their property?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman seeks an instant reply to a judgment which we have not yet seen in full, but, obviously, the result of which we know. He must agree that it is better to see the judgment before commenting on it.

Q2. **Mr. Dobson** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Prime Minister tell the House which she thinks will contribute most to improving presentations and propaganda for the Tory party, her recent appointment of Lord Young as Secretary of State for Employment, or her earlier appointment of his brother, Mr. Stuart Young, as chairman of the governors of the BBC?

The Prime Minister: Those are excellent appointments.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. Friend consider changes in the way in which accident compensation is awarded, so that people such as my constituents from St. Michael's, who received appalling injuries in the explosion at Abbeystead, and their dependants, who have already been waiting for 18 months without receiving a penny compensation, do not have to go through the courts to establish negligence so as to receive compensation?

The Prime Minister: I take note of what my hon. Friend says. I had the impression that the matter was still sub judice, but I shall consider it further.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister sought last night to give the impression that she is a recruit to renewal. Does that mean that her White Paper plans, published earlier this year, to cut expenditure in investment on construction, vehicles, plant and industrial support by 15 per cent. over the next two years have been abandoned? If it means that, we are delighted. If not, will she admit that last night she was up to her usual tricks of fabrication?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense. Had he listened to the replies that I have given from the Dispatch Box twice a week during almost every week the House has been sitting, he would have heard me say that, last year, investment was at a record high of £55 billion, with the private sector outpacing the public sector. That is still true. I just wish that he had heard me say it about 20 times.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister never admits that manufacturing investment this year is still 20 per cent. in real terms below what it was in 1979. Does she share her Government's lack of concern for manufacturing investment? Does she believe that our future lies, as the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry said, in tourism? Will she now answer the question? Will she abandon those policies, or will she go ahead with cuts in construction, investment, plant, vehicles and industrial support during the next two years? If so, can she explain to the country how we can possibly afford it?

The Prime Minister: What matters is the return that one secures on investment. Because we have higher profits, we are now getting higher investment. The right hon. Gentleman always tries to ignore investment in the extractive industries, such as coal, which do not come under manufacturing industry. I also note how much he tries to disparage tourism. What matters is total investment, which is at an all-time high, and which we expect to remain high in the coming year. I am so sorry that he tries to run down tourism and other industries. We do not.

Q3. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evennett: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the people of Thamesmead on their recent vote to establish a community trust to run the town after the abolition of the GLC, and their complete rejection of a takeover by Left-wing Greenwich council?

The Prime Minister: The vote by the people of Thamesmead was very significant. They have chosen a route that gives them far more control over their futures. That is absolutely correct, and I congratulate them on their choice.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Before the Prime Minister makes a statement on the Trustee Savings Bank, Scotland, will she bear in mind the fact that to proceed with legislation in the light of the judgment in the Court of Session would be to expropriate assets without compensation? In the light of the assurance that she gave to me on 23 July that the findings of the Scottish court would be obeyed, will she assure the House that she will not instruct an appeal to the English House of Lords?

The Prime Minister: Of course, the law must be upheld, but one has a right to all the remedies that the law proposes. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman is not asking for instant comment. He and the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) would be the first to condemn that, and would think it right to consider the judgment before reaching decisions.

Q4. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Prime Minister drag herself away from all these banquets to consider for a few moments that

a quarter of her Government's £100 million support for Johnson Matthey Bankers could provide security for tens of thousands of working people in Liverpool, who do not aspire to £400,000 retirement homes in Dulwich, but only to decent family homes with gardens? Is it not obscene that the Government should prepare for a lock-out of council workers in Liverpool, while at the same time running a gravy train for their friends in the City?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is trying to compare two completely different things. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has made several statements and has answered many questions about Johnson Matthey Bankers. The matter is in the hands of the police, and it is for them to decide what to do. The people who are running Liverpool have brought it to its present disgraceful state.

Sir William Clark: Following my right hon. Friend's excellent speech at the Mansion House yesterday evening, does she agree that, from a total public expenditure of £139 billion this year, about £24 billion will be spent on capital projects? That is about 17 per cent. of our total expenditure, which is not a bad record. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that percentage can be increased only in three ways: by cutting other public expenditure, by increasing the public sector borrowing requirement or by increasing taxes?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I believe that, at last, people are beginning to realise the amount that is going in capital expenditure by the Government. Had they listened earlier, they might have got the message earlier. If we want more capital expenditure, it must come either by reducing current expenditure or by raising taxation, which would be most unwelcome to most people, especially those on below average earnings. Increased borrowing would increase interest rates, which also would be unwelcome to industry, which is trying to start up afresh.

Mr. McCusker: Will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to assure my constituents, who have survived numerous terrorist attacks launched on them from the territory of the Irish Republic, that she still considers them to be as British as her constituents and that she has no intention of diminishing that status by giving the Government of the Irish Republic any rule in the internal affairs of the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom and will remain a part of the United Kingdom unless the majority of people in Northern Ireland wish otherwise. Negotiations are still under way with the Republic. Any result will still be in accordance with the rule that decisions north of the border are taken by the United Kingdom Government, and those south of the border are taken by the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Q5. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Prime Minister agree that, when she was Secretary of State for Education and Science, she believed that one of the best investments for a nation was a first-class education system? Will she confirm that, while she has been Prime Minister, the proportion of gross domestic product spent on education has fallen from 4·3 per cent. to 3·5 per cent., which means that education has lost about £2 billion — more than enough to have saved any cuts in higher education, to have protected student grants and to have ensured that teachers could be paid a professional wage?

The Prime Minister: But, since that time, the number of pupils in schools has fallen by about 1 million. One would therefore expect the proportion of gross domestic product to fall. However, the amount spent on each pupil has never been higher than under the present Government and the proportion of teachers to pupils has never been higher than under this Government. One is entitled to say that now, instead of spending more money, we must try to get better value out of the money that we are spending.

Mr. Lawrence: Has my right hon. Friend seen the latest quarterly report of the Confederation of British Industry, which says that the employment prospects of small manufacturing businesses are the brightest for the past decade? Does that not show that the manufacturing sector has as great a role to play in sustaining our economic growth as the services sector?

The Prime Minister: I have seen the CBI's latest report. I believe that employment prospects are better, especially as, in the past two years, some 650,000 jobs have been created — the highest rate of job creation since 1973. I see that the OECD is forecasting that Britain will create more jobs than other OECD countries.

Q6. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ashley: The Prime Minister spoke last night about the construction of new hospitals, but is she aware that there is a great scandal in most of our hospitals, new and old, because of dirty and unhygienic conditions, which are damaging many patients? Is she aware that those conditions are caused by negligent health authorities which are flouting the law by hiding behind Crown immunity? Will she consider abolishing Crown immunity to get rid of those conditions?

The Prime Minister: I think that on reflection the right hon. Gentleman will see that he has made an unwarranted slur on the vast majority of our hospitals, which are extremely well run and clean. There are some problems. He has asked me before whether Crown immunity should be lifted in regard to health and safety provisions. No decision has been made. My right hon. Friend is still considering the matter.

Q7. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Sackville: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, despite massive regional aid, there are many parts of the north of England where there is grave concern about the low levels of private investment relative to the south-east? Will she give an assurance that all relevant Government

Departments will continue to take actions designed to prevent the growth of the dangerous imbalance that is developing?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend will be aware that in July my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) was being quite optimistic about Bolton and saying:

"the success of Government policies in Bolton is evidenced by new factories and shops as well as a new road, a new railway and a new hospital to be built".—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1985; Vol. 82, c. 1260.]

We are trying to increase private investment, and the north-west has received about £80 million in regional development grant in 1984-85. That is meant to help investors to go to that area and to build new factories and new commercial offices.

Questions to Ministers

3.30 pm

Mr. Speaker: Statement, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Does the right hon. Gentleman's point of order arise directly from Prime Minister's Questions?

Mr. Steel: My point of order arises directly from one of the Prime Minister's replies. You will have heard the Prime Minister say, Mr. Speaker, that she wished to reflect on the judgment in the Court of Session this morning. May we take it that, because of that reflection, the Treasury press notice on the tapes announcing an appeal is incorrect?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me. We move on to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statement.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson) *rose*——

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I think that the hon. Gentleman's point of order does not arise from Prime Minister's Questions.

Mr. Flannery: It does.

Mr. Speaker: If it does, I shall take it.

Mr. Flannery: My point of order arises from Question Time a fortnight ago, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a good try, but that is not what I meant.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In one of her replies today, the Prime Minister said that a Minister would be making a statement on the Trustee Savings Bank——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an extension of Question Time.

Mr. Craigen: It is not.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot have an extension of Question Time. The House does not want that and we have a busy day ahead of us. It is not a matter for me in any event.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In reply to my question the Prime Minister said clearly that the Government were reflecting on the judgment of the Court of Session. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) has made——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kennedy *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has said that the Prime Minister or the Government are reflecting. He did not say that I was reflecting. The hon. Gentleman must raise a point of order that I can answer.

Mr. Kennedy *rose*——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman's point of order arises directly from Questions today, I shall take it.

Mr. Skinner: The issue is quite simple for you, Mr. Speaker. If the Prime Minister has misled the House, is there not an obligation upon you, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the right hon. Lady has an opportunity to put the facts straight?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot accept that the Prime Minister has misled the House.

Autumn Statement

3.33 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement.

I am laying before the House today an autumn statement which brings together the Government's outline public expenditure plans, proposals for national insurance contributions next year, and the forecast of economic prospects for 1986 required by the Industry Act 1975.

This year's autumn statement contains considerably more information than its predecessors. It breaks new ground by providing a forecast of the public expenditure outturn for 1985-86 for each Department, and the plans not just for the year immediately ahead but for each of the next three years. Both these innovations meet specific requests from the Select Committee on the Treasury Civil Service and I hope that they will be welcomed by hon. Members.

The outturn for this financial year is expected to be the same as set out in the Budget, that is, £134 billion. After allowing for inflation, this is lower than last year, which bore the brunt of the public expenditure cost of the coal strike.

The Government will continue to maintain firm control over public spending. Following this year's review, the planning totals for 1986-87 and 1987-88 will be held to the levels set out in the Budget — £139 billion and £144 billion, respectively. For 1988-89 the total has been set at £149 billion. Over these three years public spending in real terms is expected to be broadly flat at very slightly below this year's level. As a percentage of national output it will continue to decline as it has since 1982-83. By 1988-89 it should be back to its lowest percentage since 1972-73.

In order to meet contingencies, the plans contain large reserves, rising from £4½ billion in 1986-87 to £8 billion in 1988-89. The reduction in the reserve for 1986-87 as compared with the provisional reserve for that year, which I announced at the time of the Budget, chiefly reflects the fact that the passage of time allows part of the reserve in any given year to be allocated to individual expenditure programmes as their costs become known more accurately. But the £4½ billion reserve for the year immediately ahead remains a substantial figure.

Although I expect the planning total for 1985-86 to be the same as I did at the time of the Budget, the public sector borrowing requirement — subject to the usual margin of uncertainty at this time of year—is forecast to be about £1 billion higher—some £8 billion rather than £7 billion. This is due to lower sterling oil revenues. But even at £8 billion the PSBR would be the smallest that it has been as a percentage of GDP since 1971-72.

The PSBR would, of course, have been running at a higher level than this were it not for the proceeds from privatisation, to which I will turn in a moment. But even without the privatisation proceeds, this year's forecast PSBR would still be the smallest as a percentage of GDP since 1971-72.

The Government's privatisation programme is now getting into top gear and will continue for many years to come. *[Interruption.]* I am glad to see that the Opposition welcome that. I cannot stress so strongly the importance of this programme—now being emulated throughout the world — as a fundamental objective of Government policy. The transfer of state-owned businesses to the free enterprise sector of the economy brings enormous long-term benefits to the nation as a whole in terms of greater concern for the customer and increased efficiency. It also provides the opportunity for a massive boost to wider share ownership, among both the public in general and the employees of those great enterprises in particular.

The increased pace of privatisation means that the proceeds from this programme will rise substantially from £2½ billion this year to £4¾ billion in each of the next three years. In particular, the planned flotation of the British Gas Corporation is included for the first time. At the same time, however, there have been increases in a number of public expenditure programmes, so that the overall planning totals have remained unchanged.

However, this needs to be seen in perspective. Even if the proceeds from privatisation were to be ignored altogether, the public expenditure planning total would still be broadly flat in real terms, at less than 1 per cent. above this year's total, and public spending would still be on a steadily declining path as a percentage of GDP, reaching by 1988-89 its lowest level since 1972-73.

The annual review of public spending provides an opportunity to reconsider priorities and adjust the balance between programmes. While some programmes this year have been held back, it has been possible to make significant additions to others.

There will be increased spending on the National Health Service over previous plans of £250 million in 1986-87 and £300 million in 1987-88. On top of this, health authorities are able to spend the savings from their cost improvement programmes, which are expected to amount to £150 million this year and still more in future years. This should enable health authorities to meet demographic pressures and to deliver improvements in services as well.

Total public sector provision for housing is being increased by £220 million net of receipts in 1986-87 and £200 million in 1987-88, and the housing plans now provide for some £3¼ billion of capital spending next year. Within this total, the Government believe that there should be a substantial shift in priorities in favour of renovation of the existing public sector housing stock.

An extra £54 million in 1986-87 and £71 million in 1987-88 is being made available for capital expenditure on national and local roads.

Just over £1 billion is being added to the social security programme for 1986-87, largely as a result of the 7 per cent. increase in benefits taking effect this month. Expenditure in the subsequent years of the survey period is subject to decisions on the Government's social security review, on which a White Paper will be published shortly.

Additional provision has been made under the law and order programme to allow local authorities to direct extra spending towards the police.

For defence, the provision is unchanged. After the substantial real increases in spending since 1978-79, from which the defence programme will continue to benefit, the emphasis must now switch to improving our defence capability through greater efficiency and value for money, especially in procurement.

On employment, there were large additions in the Budget to fund an expansion of the youth training scheme and the community programme. In this survey, a number of new initiatives have been agreed, but savings are to be made by a reduction in payments from the redundancy

[Mr. Nigel Lawson]

fund. My right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General will be making a statement giving further details later today.

There have been significant improvements in efficiency and value for money in many programmes. It is a great mistake to fall into the trap of measuring public expenditure programmes solely in terms of the money put into them: it is improved output that matters.

Further details of these and other changes are contained in the autumn statement itself, and of course full details, together with information on running costs and manpower, will be given in the public expenditure White Paper to be published early in the new year.

I now turn to national insurance contributions. The Government have conducted the usual autumn review of contributions in the light of advice from the Government Actuary on the prospective income and expenditure of the national insurance fund.

The lower earnings limit will be increased next April to £38 a week, in line with the single person's pension, and the upper earnings limit will be similarly increased to £285 a week, broadly in line with earnings.

I announced in the Budget reduced rates of contribution for the lower paid and their employers—5 per cent. for those earning up to £55 a week, 7 per cent. for those earning up to £90 a week and 9 per cent. for employers of workers earning up to £130 a week. These took effect at the beginning of last month and are already starting to provide welcome assistance to the low paid and their employers, and a stimulus to the employment of the young and unskilled. The limits for these reduced rate bands will also be increased from April, in line with the lower and upper earnings limits, to £60, £95 and £140 a week, respectively.

There will be no change in the main class 1 contribution rates, which will remain at 9 per cent. for employees and 10·45 per cent. for employers. This is the third year running in which national insurance contribution rates have been held constant, despite a growing number of pensioners and the substantial uprating of benefits taking effect later this month.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services will this afternoon announce details of these proposals, and will lay before Parliament the necessary order and the accompanying report by the Government Actuary.

Finally, I turn to the Industry Act forecast. The economy is progressing very much as I envisaged at the time of the Budget. Inflation is falling again, after the predicted temporary rise in the spring, although I now expect inflation in the fourth quarter of this year to be slightly above the Budget forecast: 5½ per cent. rather than 5 per cent.

The overall growth of the economy this year still looks like turning out at 3½ per cent. — the highest rate of growth since 1973.

The pattern of growth, too, has been much as envisaged. Exports and business investment, as expected, were the fastest growing elements in demand in 1985. The rise in total investment is now put at 4 per cent. in 1985; within this figure business investment is expected to be up by 7 to 8 per cent., to yet another all-time record.

As a result of this steady progress, there has been a substantial growth in the number of people in work since 1983. This has now been reflected in a levelling out in unemployment — albeit still at a sadly high level, not least because of the rapid growth in the total labour force. The prospect here is for some further improvement, assisted by the measures I announced in the Budget to help on the jobs front, which will have their main effect in 1986. But that improvement could easily be put at risk by excessive pay settlements.

The prospect for 1986 is one of continued growth and still lower inflation. The composition of growth is likely to change somewhat, with consumer spending taking up the running as exports—which had an exceptional rise of 7 per cent. this year—grow more slowly. The current account balance of payments surplus is forecast at £4 billion, compared with £3 billion in 1985. Fixed investment is expected to grow, once again, slightly faster than the economy as a whole.

Overall, the economy in 1986 is expected to grow by a further 3 per cent. — the fifth successive year of growth at an average of 3 per cent. a year, and into the sixth, the best performance since before the first oil shock. At the same time, inflation is expected to fall further, to 3¾ per cent. in the fourth quarter of 1986.

Indeed, if the forecast is correct—and I am the first to admit its inevitable fallibility—1986 promises to be the first year since the 'sixties when inflation and growth will be within one point of each other. What is beyond doubt is that we are now achieving the steady growth with low inflation which successive Governments have sought in vain for a generation.

All in all, Mr. Speaker, the progress and prospects I have described amount to the clearest possible vindication of the policies we have been following these past six years, and will continue to follow.

The autumn statement is now available from the Vote Office, and the House will no doubt wish to take it into account when we debate the economy tomorrow. The framework of public expenditure control which it sets out should allow scope for considered and justified reductions in the burden of taxation; and these in turn will further reinforce the economy's flexibility and dynamism. It is on that prospect that the future prosperity of all our people depends.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): The Chancellor, with characteristic modesty, claims an achievement which a generation of his predecessors sought but failed to obtain. The speaking note for Government Back Benchers, which has been circulated on today's subject—the economy—describes its state as a dream come true. Does the Chancellor regard the economy as a "dream come true" for the 3·5 million men and women who are unemployed, for the families whose child benefit is to be cut in real terms, for the 95 per cent. of taxpayers who are paying more now than in 1979 and for the owner-occupiers who are burdened by uniquely high interest rates?

Will the Chancellor tell us some of the details of his proposal? Why have we not this year been told the size of what is called the "fiscal adjustment"? Is it because last year the right hon. Gentleman so mismanaged and bungled his tax cut promises that he precipitated the January sterling crisis? Is it simply because, like so many other promises—especially tax cut promises—what started out as an estimate of fiscal adjustment ended with a promise that he failed to deliver? Or, more likely, has he failed to

tell us the fiscal adjustment because he wishes to pretend that the sale of British Gas is not intended to finance the temporary tax cuts with which he hopes to solve some of the Conservatives' electoral problems?

If the Chancellor denies the connection between the sale of British Gas and the prospect of tax cuts, will he tell us whether the proposed temporary tax cuts could be financed without selling off those national assets? What other possible explanation can the right hon. Gentleman give the House for creating a private monopoly, already equipped with the power to fleece its consumers? When the Chancellor has explained the purpose of that privatisation, will he tell us about the long-term implications? What does he think should happen when the privatisation proceeds run out? Does he think that the tax cuts that they finance should be restored, or does he think that there should be more cuts in public expenditure? After British Gas is sold and that annual income to the Government is lost, how does the right hon. Gentleman recommend that it should be made up—not for one year or two years, but in perpetuity?

All that the right hon. Gentleman can buy with the proceeds of the sale of British Gas is time. I ask the Chancellor again: what happens when the privatisation proceeds run out? What happens when the oil revenues run out? What happens when the report by the House of Lords predicting a collapse in manufacturing industry is proved to be true? In short, is the Chancellor capable of thinking beyond, looking beyond and planning beyond October 1987?

Tucked away in the seventh paragraph of the Chancellor's statement was the aside that the public sector borrowing requirement had increased £1 billion above its target; yet, despite the PSBR being £1 billion out of line, the right hon. Gentleman still boasts about the economy's strength. As the Government have now been partly converted to the virtues of investing in public sector capital —a proposition that they derided and scorned last year when it was advocated by the Opposition—why does not the Chancellor at least allow the same overshoot next year which he has found tolerable this year to finance some more job creation through public sector capital expenditure? Is it because all his plans, all his intentions and everything revealed by this statement are concerned not with long-term investment but with short-term expediency?

Let me give the House an obvious example from the document. The Chancellor boasts about growth next year. Every penny of that growth will be accounted for by personal consumption. According to the right hon. Gentleman's own figures, export growth will collapse to 2 per cent. and imports will grow by twice that amount. Of his asset sales, one tenth will go on capital expenditure and nine tenths will be used to finance the election bribes.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Norman Tebbit): What is the right hon. Gentleman worried about?

Mr. Hattersley: I am worried about the economy. I am not worried about the Conservative party.

Finally, since we have heard so much about growth, will the Chancellor have the grace to admit that the real figure for growth during the entire life of this Government is an annual average of 1·3 per cent.? The real growth that we have had demonstrated today is a growth of panic about the Government's future.

Mr. Lawson: It is clear that the right hon. Gentleman is in an acute state of panic about his electoral chances.

On the subject of growth, there was a world recession during the Government's early years. We went to the polls in 1983, having gone through that recession, and, of course, there was a low rate of growth. I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman is trying to have a replay of the last general election, but I must remind him that the electorate returned the Government to office with an increased majority.

On the right hon. Gentleman's point about growth next year—I am glad that he accepts my forecast of 3 per cent. for next year—it is completely untrue to say that this is made up entirely of consumer expenditure, although I have nothing against that. There is a 3½ per cent. growth of fixed investment predicted—faster than the growth of the economy as a whole.

The right hon. Gentleman devoted a large part of his remarks to privatisation. If he had listened to my statement, he would have heard that public expenditure was declining steadily as a proportion of GDP, even if no account is taken of the proceeds of privatisation. Therefore, the scope for tax reductions is assured. To the extent that there is any relationship between the privatisation proceeds and tax rates, it enables the tax reductions which would take place in any case to be brought forward a little to the great benefit of the economy. As I have told the House on a number of occasions, the public sector borrowing requirement is always set after taking full account of the proceeds of privatisation. The privatisation programme will not merely carry on throughout this Parliament, as set out in the autumn statement; it will carry on throughout the next Parliament as well. The right hon. Gentleman asked what would happen when that programme came to an end. I am glad to learn of his confidence that we shall be in office for a further six years.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): If allowance is made for the dubious accounting convention that treats the proceeds of asset sales as reductions in borrowing and public expenditure and excludes debt interest from the planning totals, does my right hon. Friend agree that domestic demand has been reflating and is planned to go on reflating?

Mr. Lawson: No; I am afraid that my right hon. Friend is wrong on both counts. He calls the accounting convention dubious, but that is the international accounting convention. It is not a convention peculiar to this country. It was followed by the Labour Government when they were in office. The figures are clearly set out so that my right hon. Friend can make the adjustment that he seeks to make. He will see that general Government expenditure, including debt interest, declines as a proportion of GDP.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Is the Chancellor aware that the disposal of £5 billion of public assets represents sales of an exceptional magnitude and that it is essential that he does not hurriedly unload them to meet his public expenditure targets? Will he place a higher priority on this matter than he has done in the past by ensuring that, if necessary, such sales are postponed to avoid denying to the taxpayer and the British public the full worth of those assets.

Mr. Lawson: The flotations of state-owned companies have been conducted with great and acknowledged success throughout the world. As a result, there is benefit to the companies themselves, to the people employed in them and to the nation. I hope that if the right hon. Gentleman catches your eye again, Mr. Speaker, at the end of these questions he will perhaps inform the House which of the companies that we have privatised or plan to privatise, he will not, if he comes to office, renationalise.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, despite the prophets of gloom and doom, his statement will be widely welcomed not only in the House but in the country? An encouraging aspect of his autumn statement is the continual decrease of public expenditure in relation to GDP. Obviously, that will bring forward the time when tax burdens can be reduced. Does he further agree that our competitors overseas with a low proportion of GDP vis-a-vis public expenditure and low taxation are able to create jobs?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is quite right. The two most successful economies in the world today are those of the United States and Japan. They have the lowest proportion of public expenditure in relation to GDP, and the lowest level of taxation in relation to GDP. Those are important facts to bear in mind, particularly in the context of how to create more jobs. In addition to our satisfactory record on public expenditure and the prospects there, the House will welcome the prospect of a further reduction in inflation to below 4 per cent.

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): Can the Chancellor tell us whether one of the programmes to be held back is overseas aid? If so, is that the Government's response to the massive lobby of this House by people of all political persuasions about the Government's reaction to Third world problems?

Can the Chancellor confirm that if, for some reason or other, the privatisation programme is delayed — and today he mentioned some of the difficulties involved— tax cuts will be put off with it?

Is the Chancellor's statement an admission by the Government that monetarism does not solve the undoubted problems of pay settlements? If he accepts that that is so in his statement, can he tell us what the Government will do about pay settlements in the next two years? Please do not say, "Appeal to the CBI."

Mr. Lawson: One question is quite enough, and I will answer the first question that the hon. Gentleman raised which I expect is closer to his heart—the matter of aid. I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no reduction in the aid budget. The aid budget has been increased and will be maintained in real terms throughout the survey period.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): As my right hon. Friend is now giving more weight to interest rates and less to monetary targets, may I ask whether he now considers this to be a suitable time to apply for entry to the European monetary system?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend knows that we keep this matter under continual review.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Does the Chancellor expect manufacturing output in 1986 to recover to its 1979 level? When the right hon. Gentleman says the assumption in the forecast is that the exchange index will remain at about 81, is the implication that if the dollar falls, the pound will be allowed to fall, too, part way against the deutschmark?

Mr. Lawson: It is not helpful to go into details about assumptions of exchange rates. As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, the assumption is that the exchange rate, the weighted average, will remain broadly at this level. In answer to his first question, I hope he welcomes the fact that we now look like going into the sixth successive year of steady growth at around 3 per cent. a year.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): While welcoming the increase in the proceeds of asset sales, I should like to ask my right hon. Friend whether he is aware that some of his hon. Friends are disappointed that the Government have not been able to reduce public expenditure and regret that, before the deduction of asset sales, Government spending will increase by over £7 billion in the next year?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend should remember that, unlike previous Governments, we are steadily reducing public expenditure as a share of gross domestic product.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): What predictions has the Chancellor made about the impact of this autumn statement on the level of unemployment?

Mr. Lawson: The autumn statement in itself is but a small part of the Government's overall policies. Those policies have brought about a greater growth in the number of jobs than in all the other countries of the Common Market put together. Over the last six months we have seen a flattening out in the level of unemployment.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that he is to be warmly congratulated on preparing the way for a series of Budgets which will reduce the level of personal and other taxation and increase public capital spending where it is needed? That will be done against a background of falling inflation and rising output. As he said, that has been an aim of Governments for many years and hitherto it has not been achieved. When he looks at the scope of tax cuts, will he consider whether there is room for returning to a lower rate of tax of, say, 25 per cent.—the kind which existed previously —so as to reduce the disincentives to those who are first going to work?

Mr. Lawson: I will certainly be happy to look into the suggestion that my right hon. Friend has made.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Chancellor aware that he is not only selling off the country's silver to balance the books, but selling off some of our great national institutions? The Institute of Psychiatry is having to sell itself to private American firms in order to keep going. The Chancellor should be deeply ashamed of pimping for this financial prostitution.

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. Gentleman is a little bit confused. These enterprises are sold not to American firms, but to the British people.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): If my right hon. Friend seeks more effectively to rebut arguments such as that which has just been presented—that we are burning the seedcorn by financing current expenditure not only with the proceeds from privatisation but with the proceeds of North sea oil—is there not a compelling case for the

Government doing what every prudent individual and company has to do, which is to account separately for the capital income and outgoings and for current income?

Mr. Lawson: I take entirely my hon. Friend's point. It is one which I have considered on a number of occasions. I have some responsibility in this matter. The different figures for current and capital expenditure are shown much more clearly in the national accounts for anybody to see. These distinctions are not always very, not very—[AN HON. MEMBER: "Helpful."]—helpful. Thank you very much. To take one example, some expenditure on education—not all, but some—which is classified as current expenditure is in fact an investment.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Chancellor reflect on the consumer-led boom that he has predicted and give the House some indication about the effect of the boom on imports, and in particular on our propensity to import manufactured goods?

Mr. Lawson: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is so gloomy at the prospect of the consumer doing a little bit better. I can give him the answer. We expect the current account surplus of the balance of payments to rise from £3 billion this year to £4 billion next year.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Does my right hon. Friend recall that when Noah sent the animals from the Ark two by two, he said to them, "Go forth and multiply"? Unfortunately, two of them coming out were snakes and they said, "We can't; we're adders." Some of us are a bit concerned because the adding up of the Budget in recent years has meant restriction. I am glad to know that in his statement he is adding to the amount of money spent on housing and the infrastructure. Will he continue that process for the next few months?

Mr. Lawson: I always listen carefully to the advice of my Leicestershire neighbour. I read in the papers recently that, after a long and distinguished career in this House, he is not proposing to stand at the next election. I wish him a happy retirement.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Will the Chancellor of the Exchequer come clean and tell the House that the Government have done an about-turn? Is it not true that the Government are reflating the economy by selling off public assets? Does not the flood of press releases from Government Departments this afternoon, boasting about their public expenditure increases, demonstrate that fact?

If the Chancellor has a fiscal adjustment to make later in the year, will he also ensure that that resource goes into creating jobs and helping those who have been hit by the mistaken policies of the past five or six years—those who are unemployed and need jobs and help with the poverty that they are facing?

Mr. Lawson: As I said, the employment prospect, although not as good as I should like, is clearly improving.

The only about-turn of which I am aware is by those former members of the Labour party who are now members of the SDP.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Would it create any problem for my right hon. Friend's financial strategy if, in the ensuing year, he permitted water authorities to borrow in the market rather than to implement their capital investment programmes through increased charges? Is he aware that this year the Anglian water authority has said that it can carry out its capital investment, if it is able to borrow in the market, with increases of only 7 per cent., but that if it has to be done by charges the figures will be 11 per cent? Farmers and business men very much resent having to pay increases that are higher than inflation and higher than the water authorities themselves would wish.

Mr. Lawson: It is not the case that the water authorities could borrow more cheaply in the market than they do from the Government.

My hon. Friend raises the very interesting question of the privatisation of the water authorities. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is thinking very deeply about that.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Has the Chancellor of the Exchequer any idea how deeply offensive it is for him and other members of the Government to talk of six years of steady growth in those areas which have suffered six years of 20 per cent. unemployment, particularly when they are hit by cuts in Government regional and other aid? When will the boasted prosperity reach those areas?

Mr. Lawson: I have never sought to deny the problem of unemployment in particular parts of the country. By the same token, I hope that the Opposition will not seek to deny the success in economic growth and lower inflation that the Government have achieved.

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): Given my right hon. Friend's welcome commitment to infrastructural refurbishment, while at the same time keeping a firm hand on public borrowing, will he now relax the rules governing the amount of their own money that local authorities can spend? Has he heard the old adage that a stitch in time saves nine?

Mr. Lawson: The reasons for the restriction on the pace at which local authorities can use the receipts from council house sales were set out clearly in the debates in the last Session. I do not see that the position has changed at all from that time.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Given that the Prime Minister told the House at the Dispatch Box a year ago that increased infrastructure was not a cost-effective way of increasing jobs, and that in January she said that it would cost £37,000 for an unemployed worker to go into public sector house building, is the Chancellor's statement today intended to increase or decrease unemployment?

Mr. Lawson: As I said in reply to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), the Government's policy, among other things, is designed to do what it can to help to create new jobs. New jobs are being created faster than in the whole of the rest of the European Community put together.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, in the circumstances, the record he has put before the House is by any standards a measure of outstanding performance? It is the envy of all democratic Governments and beyond the wildest dreams of the Labour party, We should be very grateful to him for it.

My right hon. Friend did not mention interest rates, which are hitting British business and its prospects for growth? Will he please say something on this subject?

Mr. Lawson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his accurate assessment of the Government's record.

As I have said on several occasions, interest rates will be kept no higher than is necessary to ensure that there are monetary conditions sufficient to reduce inflation. I will not take any chances with inflation.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): What is the Chancellor's estimate for the deficit on the balance of trade in manufactures?

Mr. Lawson: I do not think that the deficit on the balance of trade in manufactures will be very different this year from last year.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): I also thank my right hon. Friend for his statement, in particular for the extra injection of money into the National Health Service. It comes at a critical time in the Health Service which has resulted in some contraction of services. I hope that my right hon. Friend will discuss with the Secretary of State for Social Services the need for some reappraisal at district level so that the valuable extra money may be used speedily.

Mr. Lawson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. The whole House knows of his concern for and the work that he has done in the Health Service — in particular, the hospitals—over many years. However, I am still concerned about the waste that takes place within the National Health Service. There is scope for achieving enormously greater value and output from the existing expenditure, in addition to what may be gained from any increase in expenditure. I hope that those responsible in the Health Service will address themselves very quickly to achieving those savings.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I am quite relaxed about receiving an uncivil answer from a Chancellor who can be as rude to Conservative Members as he is to the Opposition. Does he understand that many people, not only in the Labour party, and not only my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), are deeply concerned to hear what some of us did on Friday about the affair of Johnson Matthey? Why is he so coy——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I find it very difficult to know how the hon. Member will relate his question to the autumn statement.

Mr. Dalyell: It relates to the general handling of the economy. The question is simple: why is the Chancellor so coy about having an inquiry? In December 1984, was he told the extent of the alleged fraud——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's question has much connection with the statement.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): In welcoming the Government's——

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Nigel Forman.

Mr. Forman: I welcome the Government's continuing programme of asset sales. Will my right hon. Friend take the trouble to stress not only the arguments for asset sales as an offset to increased public spending on worthy projects but those for wider share ownership and, most importantly, the fact that the companies concerned, when returned to the private sector, will be contributing to the revenue by way of personal and corporate taxation?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right in thinking that the purpose of privatisation is to benefit the nation through the greater efficiency of the companies concerned. Every one of them has done better in the private sector than it did when it was owned by the state. The purpose is also to accompany it with a greater expansion of share ownership — doubling the number of individual shareholders throughout the country. That is the purpose of privatisation, and that is why it is here.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Can the Chancellor be more positive about unemployment? Can he give even an assessment of how many people he expects to get work, thereby reducing unemployment, as a result of his asset-stripping and his statement?

Mr. Lawson: As the hon. Gentleman knows, it is not the custom to give forecasts of unemployment. I expect the growth in the number of people in employment, which is greater than in the whole of the rest of the European Community, to continue.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is another statement to follow. I shall call those hon. Members who are on my list for this statement on the next statement if they wish to take part then.

Mr. Hattersley: The Chancellor told me that the sale of British Gas did no more than bring forward tax reductions. Will he, therefore, confirm that there could be no tax reduction this year or next year without the sale of British Gas?

Mr. Lawson: I said nothing of the sort. Therefore, I can confirm nothing of the sort.

Mr. Speaker: Statement—Mr. Kenneth Clarke.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the points of order after the statements, as is usual.

Mr. Flannery: I have a point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I said to the hon. Gentleman that I would take his point of order after the statement. I know what it is about, because he has kindly given me notice of it.

Later—

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order. Some of my hon. Friends — some but not all — thought that you, Mr. Speaker, were a bit quick on the draw in ruling out of order my question to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I asked him to reflect on the issues concerned because they were about public and private assets. At your convenience, Mr. Speaker, perhaps you will write to me about your reasons for that ruling.

Mr. Speaker: I shall not give my reasons. I do not think that the House would appreciate that. I hope that I was not quick on the draw. If the hon. Gentleman had mentioned "privatisation", or something of that sort, that might have been easier for me.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): In relation to the statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the ensuing questions, especially the one that was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), some of us find it strange and difficult to understand that when the Chancellor of the Exchequer had the opportunity to clear his name by having a public inquiry into the Johnson Matthey affair——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must stop the hon. Gentleman. I cannot help him, because it is not a matter for me.

Enterprise and Employment

4.21 pm

The Paymaster General (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, I should like to make a statement on new enterprise and employment measures. Overall provision for the Department of Employment has increased by some £600 million in each of the years 1986-87 and 1987-88 compared with last year's autumn statement. That growth in expenditure has enabled us to increase the number of jobs available under the community programme by 100,000, to introduce the new two-year youth training programme as from April next year, which will ultimately help some 450,000 young people each year and lead to real qualifications for a working life. It will also enable us to fund a range of new measures which I am announcing today.

The cost of those new measures is, of course, included in my Department's public expenditure plans for 1986-89 which were announced a few momemts ago by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exhequer. These and other increases in our Department's spending are offset in part by a reduction in spending from the redundancy fund.

We propose to bring to an end, for all firms other than those with fewer than 10 employees, the system of sharing part of the cost of statutory redundancy payments through rebates from the redundancy fund. Our intention is that the rebate should not be payable for redundancies which take effect after 31 October 1986. We shall introduce the necessary legislation later this Session.

It is important to stress that that change does not affect employees' entitlements in any way. Employees will be entitled, as before, to redundancy payments from their employer to go to an industrial tribunal if the employer refuses to make the required payment, and, where an employer cannot pay, to receive a payment direct from the Department of Employment.

The rebate has been steadily reduced by successive Governments. It is now 35 per cent. For most employers that is no longer a significant contribution to their total redundancy costs. We believe that that public spending should no longer be used in subsidising redundancy and ought now to be put to better use.

I turn now to our further measures to stimulate enterprise and the growth of small businesses and also to help long-term unemployed people find work.

We have suffered for many years from one of the lowest rates of self-employment and new business creation in the whole of western Europe. That has now changed. We now have more self-employed people than for some 60 years. However, we can do still more to encourage the growth of self-employment and small business by ensuring that both advice and finance are available to the small business man at the right time. We are therefore announcing three measures designed to further those aims.

As far as self-employment is concerned, the enterprise allowance scheme has already helped nearly 110,000 unemployed people since August 1983 to set themselves up in business. We have therefore decided to expand the scheme to a maximum of 80,000 new entrants a year in 1986-87 at an additional cost of £17·5 million — an increase of 20 per cent.

We have already assisted over £500 million of lending to small businesses through the loan guarantee scheme. In order to provide better access to finance and business

[The Paymaster General]

advice we have now decided to extend the scheme, which was due to end in December 1985, until the end of this financial year while we consider its longer-term future.

We are also increasing significantly the support given in England to local enterprise agencies, which play an important and growing role in providing business advice and practical assistance to small firms at the local level. We are making available an additional £2·5 million for that purpose in 1986-87.

Besides its new responsibility for small firms, the Department of Employment now also has responsibility for tourism. The industry estimates that it is creating over 50,000 jobs a year. Last year some 14 million people visited this country, spending over £4 billion. To ensure that that growth continues, we are increasing the funds available next year to the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board to £40 million—an increase of about 20 per cent. in the boards' funding. We shall ensure that a substantial part of that money will benefit areas of the country which could attract more tourists and where unemployment is high.

I turn now to our measures to help the long-term unemployed. They are designed to tackle two key problems. The first is that many people who have been unemployed for a long time become demoralised about their ability to find work. The second is that the relationship of benefits to pay can reduce the attractiveness of jobs at the lower end of the wages scale. We propose therefore to introduce pilot schemes to test the effectiveness of two entirely new measures designed to combat those problems. Those pilots will operate for six months from January 1986 in seven different areas.

First, we are asking the Manpower Services Commission to ask long-term unemployed people in the pilot areas to a counselling interview at their jobcentre. The object will be to see whether they can be placed in suitable jobs — including jobs in the expanding community programme—or in existing training courses. In addition, the MSC will be able to offer places on entirely new short training courses specifically designed for those who have been out of work for more than a year. The courses will help to assess their potential and aptitudes, to brush up their basic working skills and to improve the techniques of applying for a job. We shall ask the MSC to cover as many as possible of the long-term unemployed in the pilot areas with those new arrangements so that we can assess their effectiveness.

The second new measure is a job start scheme. This is a radical new approach under which any person in the pilot area who finds a job after being unemployed for at least 12 months will be paid a weekly allowance of £20 for the first six months of employment in addition to his or her wage. The scheme aims to make lower paid jobs more attractive to people on high rates of benefit. The allowance will be available to those who take jobs with a gross income of less than £80 a week. Full details will be announced shortly.

In the improving climate for jobs, we are determined to increase our contact with those long-term unemployed people who may have been losing hope. We have already started the expansion of job clubs, which have so far achieved remarkable success in placing the majority of people who use them. We are writing to all long-term unemployed people inviting them to contact their jobcentres for advice and support and the two pilot measures announced today reinforce our determination to help long-term unemployed people back into jobs.

The range of measures that I have announced today also demonstrates our determination to intensify our efforts to promote enterprise and business growth. We are creating the conditions in which jobs will come and unemployment will be reduced. I believe that today's new measures should have the support of all parts of the House.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): Any measures that contribute to a reduction in unemployment will be welcomed by all sides of the House, but there is very little in the statement that will make a real contribution to increasing jobs. The Paymaster General has not made clear how many jobs he estimates will come from the series of measures he has announced. That is what the unemployed want to know—how many jobs will be brought about by this intervention of the Government to reduce unemployment.

Does the Paymaster General accept that his proposals have more to do with massaging the unemployment figures for the coming general election than with increasing real unemployment?

Does he further accept that the community programme to which he referred pays people £65 a week? If any of those programmes are expanded, does he envisage that more will be paid to people in those jobs?

Most of the youth training schemes are not new. Announcements were made about them previously. There is a possibility of 100,000 more YTS places being provided as a result of the announcement that the Paymaster General has just made. Can he tell us whether the quality of the training that young people can expect to receive under the scheme will be more than under the skivvy schemes offered at present? [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] The Paymaster General has only to interview YTS people to make a judgment about that. Will compulsion be used to get youngsters into YTS by the implementation of a mechanism to report those who refuse to accept places on such schemes.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman made proposals on redundancy. As the employer will now have to pay the full cost of redundancy, what is the right hon. and learned Gentleman's estimate of the increased number of redundancies, brought about by the Government's policies? While carrying their fair share of redundancy costs, will employers now face an extra charge of £250 million, to finance the scheme that the Paymaster General announced? Does that mean that there might be changes in the national insurance contribution to redundancy payments?

With regard to his proposals on local enterprise schemes, can the Paymaster General tell us whether he is prepared to be as generous in his approach to local authorities that have local employment and enterprise schemes? They have done a better job than many of the private enterprise schemes, producing more jobs, which are often cheaper, of better quality and longer-term. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that I do not want to knock private schemes? Anything that creates jobs I quite welcome—[HON. MEMBERS: "Quite?"] Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman join me in supporting instead of attacking local authorities that use their resources to create jobs through their enterprise schemes? I hope that he will give us an assurance about that.

Does the Paymaster General accept that his proposals to help the long-term unemployed will be welcomed in the House, but that hon. Members will recall that about 1·3 million people are long-term unemployed, which is more than the total unemployment that the Government inherited from the Labour Government? The House will welcome the right hon. and learned Gentleman's statement that he has recognised that the long-term unemployed are demoralised and not to be attacked. As often happens now, people say that such people do not want to work and are workshy. We constantly hear it from someone in another place.

The new initiative to which the Paymaster General referred is more about reducing wage levels than about meeting the need for real jobs. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that £20 added to average unemployment pay of about £50 gives a wage level of £70 for the six-month scheme? If that is so, will the scheme be compulsory? If people refuse to go on it, will they lose their benefit? At the end of the six-month period, if a person refuses to continue to work for a wage from which the £20 has been deducted, will he face the prospect of suspension of benefit?

The Paymaster General — [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh, no."] I am sorry. The Paymaster General's statement has many measures in it, and I am entitled to ask at least one question about each one.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman announced an extra £40 million of Government money to increase tourism. There may be more jobs for ice cream salesmen and so on, but does he accept that the reason why more people are visiting this country is to do with the high pound? The reason why people are visiting areas such as the west midlands is that the high pound destroyed the manufacturing base in that area. We find no comfort in thinking that now we must earn our living in the tourist industry.

If the Government's policy is to improve the business climate and create jobs, would not the community be better served with the measures that we have proposed time and again — for example, releasing the £6,000 million held by the local authorities in their housing accounts, resulting in real jobs to meet real need? The Government should be proposing such measures instead of designing policies simply to massage the unemployment figures downwards for the general election.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman asked me for estimates of how many extra jobs the package will create. It is important to stress that the background is a rapid growth in new jobs in the economy already. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said, it is estimated that 677,000 new jobs have been created up to March 1983. The package will help to encourage such increases, but we have pilot schemes to discover how much extra job creation will result from some of the proposals.

The idea that the package is designed to massage the figures goes back to a former argument. It is not possible for the hon. Gentleman to sweep aside the extensions to the enterprise allowance scheme and to the loan guarantee scheme, the new money for tourism and the new assistance for people moving from long-term unemployment to their first job, as massaging the figures. The measures are substantial and we believe that all of them will encourage further the process of job creation.

The hon. Gentleman asked how much would be paid to those who go on the community programme. We keep under review the present £63 average figure. The hon. Gentleman will know, even before he leaps into free collective bargaining in this area as in others, that if we increase that average figure too rapidly, we merely reduce the total number of people whom we can assist under the scheme. We are expanding that number rapidly at the moment to 230,000 places.

I am disappointed by the hon. Gentleman's slighting remarks about the youth training scheme. The scheme now has the support of the vast majority of Labour local authorities and a growing number of trade unions up and down the country. I share his concern that we should achieve quality training and provide training that is likely to be at least a first step towards a recognised skill and vocational qualification. If the hon. Gentleman wants me to talk about consumer reaction, I can tell him that all our surveys show that a little over 80 per cent. of young people who go on YTS say that they derive value from it and are grateful for what they obtain.

The hon. Gentleman referred to compulsion in connection with YTS and other schemes. It is not our intention to go in for any compulsion in either training or jobs. We are not changing the rules on entitlement to benefit. The position remains that, as long as people can satisfy the officers that they are genuinely available for work, they are entitled to benefit. The package is concerned with making the opportunities for that work more readily available to more people.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the effect of the change in the redundancy rebate arrangements. I am sorry, but I do not altogether understand his question. I cannot see how taking away the rebate that goes to employers who make redundancies is likely to increase the total number of redundancies. If anything, it is likely to have the reverse effect. The hon. Gentleman talked about a charge to employers. At the moment it is financed out of the redundancy fund. Therefore, the present arrangements, which we regard as obsolete, are a sharing of the pool of cost of redundancies so that the more successful businesses tend to subsidise the less successful businesses.

Any question of changes in national insurance charges will have to come much later, because the immediate impact in the coming year is negligible. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has made clear our decision on national insurance charges for next year.

We are greatly increasing support for local enterprise agencies. They provide advice and support, and sometimes manage workshops. They intervene directly and helpfully in the business creation process. I shall reserve for a later occasion the debate about the good work of local authority enterprise boards which, compared with the hon. Gentleman's description, I find at the least variable. I am not at all sure that the policy of some of the local authority enterprise boards, of investing ratepayers' money directly in somewhat dodgy financial businesses, is altogether a good rival for our local employment agencies.

As regards the long-term unemployed, we all agree on the need to tackle the problems of over a million of these people. The fact that we now have an improving climate for jobs makes it easier for us to do so. What we are doing is re-establishing contact with them all, because some of them may well have assumed that no jobs can be found for them, and, when we have established contact, offering

[Mr. Clarke]

them a range of services, job experience, training and the kind of support offered by job clubs and so on that will make it much easier for many of them to find jobs. A higher level of vacancies is being notified to jobcentres than at any time since 1980. The job clubs in some difficult areas, such as the one in Middlesbrough which I visited last Friday, have had a great deal of success in placing long-term unemployed men and women in jobs.

The trouble with the long-term unemployed, as the job market improves, is that their own lack of recent work experience makes them less attractive to employers. Hence the job experience schemes, community programmes and the £20 payment that we are introducing. The latter means that the plunge from high levels of long-term benefit to income is cushioned, particularly if the job taken in the first place is a low paid one. After six months, we hope that the new employee will have so established his attractiveness to his employer that any loss in income would be made up, or that the six months' job experience will make him a much more attractive potential employee to others. Because we do not know how many new jobs it will create, we are introducing this as a pilot scheme in six or seven areas. We believe it to be a radical, new, imaginative idea to speed up the process of getting the long-term unemployed back to work.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the warm welcome on the Government's side of the House for the tone and content of his statement this afternoon? Will he tell us more about the pilot areas? Are they to be geographical areas only or concentrated on particular industries—for example, textiles?

Mr. Clarke: First of all, geographical areas: one in Scotland, one in Wales and five in England. Their exact locations are to be announced shortly by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State in the case of the two other nations and by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary in the case of England.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): If these measures are to be effective at all, both for the long-term unemployed and others, is it not the case that new training places will have to be found or existing training facilities will have to be increased? Is more money to be devoted to that? Will those training centres or skillcentres, prevented from receiving Government increases, now be able to apply for the funds for which they asked six months, 12 months, or two or three years ago, when they were attacked or closed down by the present Government?

Mr. Clarke: The total amount that we are spending on the introduction of the new youth training scheme is rising rapidly and will reach over £1 billion by the time the two-year scheme has built up to its full level. As regards skillcentres, there has recently been rationalisation of them, but the total amount of training available to adults in this country remains slightly higher than before.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there will be a very wide welcome throughout the country, and certainly among objective observers, for his increase in and expansion of the enterprise allowance scheme, which has been outstandingly successful in helping new entrepreneurs in the difficult first year of starting a new business? May I also welcome his announcement of a permanent place for the loan guarantee scheme in the armoury of help to growing businesses? It has been very cost-effective. Will my right hon. and learned Friend also tell the House that he will undertake a review of the detail of the scheme, particularly the fact that the money provided under it is very expensive? If he could reduce the premium, it would be a great help to the growing businesses that we all want to see expand.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support in pressing for the extension of the enterprise allowance scheme. It has been remarkably successful in helping people through the first year of business. For every 100 business men helped in this way, we find at the end of a year about 65 extra jobs created as they take more people into the new business.

I am also grateful for my hon. Friend's support of the loan guarantee scheme, which will be extended to give us time to review precisely those details of the present operation of the scheme to which he drew attention. I agree that the disincentive effect of the premium and other, connected matters are something to which we shall have to give our urgent attention and reach decisions.

Mr. Richard Wainwright (Colne Valley): Some of the palliatives that the Paymaster General has announced on behalf of his noble Friend will undoubtedly provide valuable but mostly temporary help to a relatively modest number of the unemployed. Will he say why his noble Friend has treated the 1·3 million long-term unemployed to these tiny crumbs? Will he explain why there are just seven pilot schemes when the needs and problems of this growing army of long-term unemployed are sufficiently known? Why this limiting of the scheme to a gross wage of £80 a week? Will he specifically say whether that must be a full week or whether this is a scheme to encourage the Government's favourite ploy of part-time jobs? Why six months? What magic transformation is likely to occur in six months?

On the problem of skilled men who have been unemployed so long that they worry about the decay of their skills, why are they exempt from a scheme that is so very limited in the maximum gross pay that is permitted?

Mr. Clarke: First, this is a joint statement by my right hon. and noble Friend and myself. I trust that in another place he will not find people so desperately trying to minimise the impact of the package that we have announced.

I am glad, however, that the hon. Gentleman welcomes the two new measures to the extent that he wishes them to be introduced all over the place now, rather than waiting for us to try them out in seven pilot areas. This Government like to try out the effectiveness of new schemes before we introduce them everywhere. I realise that the Liberal party finds it easy to discover new ideas and sell them instantly, overnight, like a magic cure-all.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): While I welcome these measures as an indication that the Government are prepared to leave no stone unturned, will not my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the greatest contribution to be made to job creation is by private employers ensuring that there is wage restraint throughout the economy, and

that if wages simply kept pace with inflation instead of constantly outstripping it we would see the creation of something like half a million new jobs every year?

Mr. Clarke: There has to be a relationship between wages on the one hand and inflation, productivity and performance on the other. I agree with my hon. Friend that if wages are allowed to outstrip the productivity improvement and performance of individual businesses, a great deal of this job creation programme will be put at risk. That is the message that we constantly reiterate. It is one to which the alliance parties offer the solution of some kind of inflation tax and a pay norm for everyone, and on which the Labour party remains uncannily silent when it comes to any discussion of employment.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Will the Paymaster General seriously consider putting more resources into the community programme to improve it and, in particular, to enable him to increase the allowance of £63? This would enable him to include family men who at the moment cannot be accommodated by the scheme.

Mr. Clarke: The average payment allowed under the scheme is £63. As I have explained, while we are reviewing it, the difficulty is that if we dramatically increase it we may reduce the number of places under the scheme. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Within a set total. We shall review that allowance but it is important not to allow the scheme to be diverted into spending more money on fewer recipients.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for his support for the programme and his emphasis on improving the quality of it. We are taking steps to ensure that the work done under the community programme is of distinct benefit to the previously unemployed people working on it and also of benefit to the community. We are aiming to raise the quality of the work done under that programme.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his statement, particularly coming after a further statement on selective investment for which many of us have pressed for some time. I congratulate him on the imagination shown in the range of measures brought forward and on trying new things such as the £20 premium. Can he assure us that, when we reach out to the long-term unemployed, an essential thing for which many of us on the Government Benches have been pressing, and which we support, the services of the Manpower Services Commission will be available in correct measure and talent to guarantee that they will be given the best possible counsel?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments and I share his welcome for the measures in the autumn statement, which confirm our continuing commitment to a proper level of capital expenditure in our financial planning. I also confirm that the Manpower Services Commission will be greatly involved in providing the quality of advice and service that is required by long-term unemployed people. We shall be taking steps to make sure that the necessary provision is made by way of resources, staff and preparation so that that proper advice and support is forthcoming.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that the reference in his statement to the long-term unemployed and the implications of his statement represent a calculated insult to the long-term unemployed? *[Interruption.]* Is he not aware that when it comes to being skilled in filling in job application forms, the long-term unemployed are experts; they fill in hundreds of application forms and receive the same answer all the time. That is why they are the long-term unemployed.

I invite the Minister to visit my constituency, where we have suffered the closure of Kineal colliery, the decisions by the BP refinery to pay off 300 people, by BP Chemicals at Grangemouth to shed 300 jobs, by ICI to shed jobs, by the Grangemouth Whisky company to pay off people, plus a threat to Grangemouth docks as a result of the closure of Gartcosh. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman come to my constituency and tell the long-term unemployed where they should send the forms once they have filled them in?

Mr. Clarke: I do not underestimate the problems faced by people who live in areas that have undergone profound change in the nature of employment locally, as the hon. Gentleman described, and that is one reason why we are putting more effort into bringing back fresh jobs, even in areas such as tourism, hotels, leisure and so on, which are derided by his Front bench spokesmen—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members deride it because it is not unionised. That is why they resist the growth of employment in tourism, leisure and related industries.

In relation to helping the long-term unemployed in difficult areas, I invite the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible to take the opportunity to visit one of the organisations that bear the unusual American-created title of job club, as I did on Friday, and meet some of the long-term unemployed as they settle down, with support and help, to make repeated applications for jobs with the advice that the MSC can give them. Where we have tried them so far, in difficult areas, about three-quarters of those who have gone through the organisation have found themselves in jobs. It is encouraging to find how high is the morale and to note the support that they give each other as well as the support that they derive from the jobcentres.

That all helps to enable them to get their way back into a job market that is steadily improving. I cannot understand why any steps of this kind should be dismissed by Opposition Members. Do they wish us to give advice and support to the long-term unemployed, or just leave them alone and pay benefit?

Mr. Piers Merchant (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his welcome initiatives today will be applauded in areas such as the north-east of England, which have suffered particularly severe economic and unemployment problems and which historically have had a low percentage of self-employed compared with the average in Britain? Will he take a special look at the well-publicised claims of the north-east in regard to tourist potential and the growth that could be achieved in that industry with sufficient help centrally?

Mr. Clarke: I hope that through the measures that I have announced and those that we have already taken, through the city action team in Newcastle and Gateshead and the Cleveland initiative that we are taking on Teesside, we shall be giving assistance to the north-east. I agree also with my hon. Friend in the emphasis that he placed on tourism because that is an area with considerable tourist attractions but also high unemployment.

[Mr. Clarke]

At present, too many overseas—indeed, British—visitors tend to pass through, perhaps with a short stop at Durham, and then head north to Edinburgh from London. We must do something to detain them longer in the north-east and provide the services that will create jobs and wealth for the local economy.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): Is the Minister aware that two former Tory Prime Ministers, the churches, a Select Committee of the House of Lords, chambers of commerce throughout the country, the trade unions and nearly 4 million unemployed people are telling the Government that their policies are not working, that the manufacturing base is in decline and that the economy is in tatters? Is he aware that it is pure arrogance on the part of the Prime Minister and her puppets to say that Conservative policies are working? His statement today is just another pathetic attempt to delude the unemployed.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman extracts a simple message from a large number of people allegedly giving it. I find that a cacophany of opinions comes forth from the various bodies to which he referred. It will not do, every time the Government explain that we have had five years of sustained growth in the economy, rising output in manufacturing, record levels of fixed investment and new jobs being created, for Opposition Members to say that that is just a palliative. I suggest that the expression of the hon. Gentleman is simply an expession of his political disappointment as he sees that things appear to be getting somewhat better.

Miss Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): May I offer a warm welcome to my right hon. and learned Friend on his initiative in supporting tourism. Will he ignore the snide remarks of Opposition Members on this important matter? Will he from this calculate how many jobs are provided through the building industry and manufacturing of various kinds in support of tourism?

Mr. Clarke: I shall try to obtain the figures that my hon. Friend describes. I am sure that she is right to say that, as soon as one goes to Plymouth in the south-west, one finds that the remarks of Opposition Members on the subject of tourism are treated with total derision, because it is already an important source of employment of all kinds throughout that locality and could be the source of many more jobs.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Welcome though many of these measures are, is the Minister aware that some of them will be regarded as dealing with the symptoms rather than with the cause of the disease? As the youth training scheme deals with one of the causes of the disease, will he agree that if its status and value are to be improved, it will have to become a recognised qualification that can be used to enable youngsters to go on and obtain further qualifications? Will he discuss the matter with the Secretary of State for Education and Science and seek to bring that about at the earliest possible opportunity?

Mr. Clarke: I can certainly say yes to the substance of that question. It must be our aim to introduce good quality youth training schemes, because youth training must become a permanent part of the preparation of many of our young people for work if we are to have a modern and developed economy. I look forward to contributions that press us towards attaining that quality. It is a pity that some people are still prepared to dismiss the whole idea and not see the way in which a modern economy should go.

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his statement about the extension of the community programme will be warmly welcomed by my constituents? That welcome will extend in particular to one aspect of the package—the facility for voluntary organisations to take on additional staff under the community programme. Will he undertake to give the matter broader publicity?

Mr. Clarke: I shall certainly take up that invitation because there is great scope in that area—so long as we make sure that the voluntary bodies that provide places under the community programme provide places in work that will be of continuing use to the unemployed. Many of the voluntary bodies that we have in mind provide a great deal of personal service. That service requires considerable organisation, and those bodies seem to have great scope for providing places under the community programme.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that the problems of the long-term unemployed in a traditional industrial district such as south Yorkshire have been exacerbated by the emergence of a poverty equilibrium of low income, poor educational attainment, poor retraining facilities, poor public amenities and now the emigration of skilled and semi-skilled workers? Will he tell the House how even one of his measures will correct one of those conditions?

Mr. Clarke: The enormous expansion of youth training, in particular, and the training initiative, has been aimed at that very problem in the last six years. I agree that in an area such as south Yorkshire, we must ensure that the level of skills is available so that the area remains attractive to new investment and employment.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's statement and in particular that part of it dealing with local enterprise agencies and enterprise allowance schemes. Will he agree that we have the best ever climate for small businesses and the most comprehensible package to help those businesses? However, will he urge the Secretary of State for Defence to introduce a scheme of voluntary service in the armed forces to complement the community programme?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend's remarks about the climate for small businesses. The creation of new small businesses has been reasonably sucessful and has provided more employment opportunities. However, there is further to go. In many economies equivalent to ours, more people are employed in small businesses in proportion to the total work force than occurs in Britian. I shall refer my hon. Friend's final point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to ascertain whether there is enthusiasm in the armed forces for a voluntary service.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Some of the measures announced today will be welcomed by some, although too few, of the long-term unemployed. Is the Paymaster General aware that undermanning in many jobcentres

means that the support and advice that he wishes to offer to the long-term unemployed is simply undeliverable? Jobcentres such as the one in my constituency are so undermanned that the staff are scrabbling to keep pace with the paperwork and pointing applicants towards the notice board. It is wholly out of the question for them to offer advice. Unless the Minister gives the MSC more resources, some of the measures announced today will be meaningless.

Mr. Clarke: We constantly try to make sure that the resources and staffing available to the MSC match its responsibilities. Resources available to the MSC have increased remarkably in recent years, but we have a duty to ensure that the resources are used in the best way and with the best value for money. Therefore, the staff required must be continually assessed. I hope that we get the balance right in Yeovil and elsewhere, but we must not reach the point where our main effort in creating new jobs is creating posts for the employees of the Manpower Services Commission. We shall endeavour to recruit the numbers required.

Mr. Richard Holt: (Langbaurgh): My right hon. and learned Friend will know how much his visit to the Lingdale YTS centre and the job club in Middlesbrough was appreciated. His announcement about the £20 for the long-term unemployed will also be appreciated. One thing that we seek is improved facilities for those have have just become unemployed and who wish to move. Would my right hon. and learned Friend consider easing the rules and regulations to assist those who could take jobs in other parts of the country before they become long-term unemployed?

Mr. Clarke: I was impressed by the Lingdale training centre which is in a depressed area. That gives the lie to some of the comments of Opposition Members, who have said that there are no prospects in such places. Young people are acquiring skills in those centres that will greatly improve their job prospects in the neighbourhood. I welcome my hon. Friend's interest in people who wish to move about the country to obtain work. We shall review the effectiveness of our geographical mobility scheme. Mobility of labour is important; the problem lies in housing policy as much as in employment policy.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The right hon. and learned Gentleman told my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) to think about tourism in Grangemouth. The right hon. and learned Gentleman referred to money for the English tourist board, but there was no mention of money for the Scottish tourist board. Is this because the Secretary of State for Scotland has been making cuts, or is there no money available?

Mr. Clarke: I announced money for the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board. That is the full extent of my responsibility. I shall pass the matter to the Secretary of State for Scotland, who I believe will make a similar statement.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): My constituents will welcome the statement on tourism and especially the increased budget for the tourist boards. In addition to our famous Nottinghamshire miners, my constituency has the heritage of Sherwood forest and Robin Hood. Only recently there was an announcement about the development of a £25 million holiday village, which will create 300 new jobs. It is an insult for the Opposition to rubbish tourism as a job creator.

Mr. Clarke: As someone who is almost a denizen of that forest, I entirely agree with my hon. Friend's remarks. I hope that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) need never visit the area when the jobs are in place to repeat his remarks about ice cream salesmen. The jobs are real and valuable. The hon. Gentleman would obstruct investment.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): May I remind the Minister that young blacks and Asians in inner cities such as Birmingham, are trebly disadvantaged when they try to find work, especially against the background of the inner city riots in the summer? What is in the statement to offer them hope of jobs?

Mr. Clarke: First, I rather agree with the hon. Member's analysis. As he knows, we are reviewing our policy on inner cities. A huge amount of money is expended by central Government in the inner city areas, where every possible support is needed to enable disadvantaged young people to get jobs. We must ensure that that money is spent to the best advantage to produce the maximum benefit for the residents and to get to the root of the problems the hon. Member described.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): May I mention one problem with the community programme? To be eligible for the community programme one must draw unemployment benefit or supplementary benefit. A redundant steel worker or mineworker who has invested his redundancy payment wisely and prudently cannot benefit from the community programme. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to consider this issue. It is unacceptable to have long-term unemployment in a constituency such as mine, or in a mining constituency, just because large redundancy payments preclude people entering the community programme.

Mr. Clarke: I shall consider that question. However, I believe that recipients of unemployment benefit as well as those of supplementary benefit are eligible for the community programme.—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] We foresee litigation about the benefit rules relating to the community programme. I shall consider the problem raised by my hon. Friend when I review the outcome of that litigation.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the redundancy payments mentioned by the Paymaster General affect people in small firms that have gone bankrupt? Will the Minister assure the House that redundancy payments will still be made in such cases? The top-up payment of £20 will reduce the payment of supplementary benefit and housing benefit. May we have a report to the House on how the pilot schemes have worked?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. The entitlement of the individual worker will not be affected. The workers in a company that has gone bankrupt, or that can no longer meet its statutory obligations on redundancy, will still be entitled to look to the redundancy fund and the Department of Employment for the payment of their legal entitlement. Details of the

[Mr. Clarke]

payment to be made to the long-term unemployed who go into work—those mentioned by the hon. Gentleman are all relevant—will be announced in the near future.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the British tourist industry will warmly welcome the initiative that he has announced? Will he confirm that the increase in funding to the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board is the full amount suggested by the ETB chairman? Will he also confirm that the chairman estimated that, were he to receive that and additional funding, he could create 10,000 new jobs? Can the Minister give us some idea of exactly where—he mentioned the beach resorts, which I welcome — the additional money will be deployed? Finally, will he confirm that tourism creates not only ice cream salesman jobs, but real, long-term jobs in construction, the steel industry and the linen industry?

Mr. Clarke: The sum that I mentioned was the amount for which the chairman asked. The chairman, who has considerable expertise in such matters, and no doubt with the support of his board, estimated the new jobs that would result. We are discussing with the boards the precise deployment of the moneys that we have made available. I have already mentioned the emphasis that we shall place on regions with high unemployment. My hon. Friend concluded with some perfectly valid points. I hope that today's exchanges, and the support that we have given the tourist boards, will stop people making flippant and hostile remarks about tourism.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Will the Paymaster General acknowledge that those of us who represent constituencies with fragile rural economies will give an unqualified welcome to the added priority given to tourism—provided, as the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) made clear, that extra cash is available for Scotland? Will the Paymaster General accept that the Labour spokesman, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) speaks only for himself and the Labour party, and not for the alliance, when it comes to the importance of tourism?

Mr. Clarke: I shall ensure that the Scottish position is made clear as rapidly as possible by those with more responsibility than I have for these matters. I endorse what the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) said. One need only look at the seats represented by the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party to realise that no hon. Member from either of those parties is likely to join in Labour's attack.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will allow questions to continue for another five minutes. We have a very heavy day ahead of us. If questions are short, everyone may participate.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): In connection with the pilot areas for the operation of the new counselling service for the long-term unemployed, will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that at least some areas of severe skill shortage are included in that scheme as they contain significant numbers of long-term unemployed people and the scope for helping people into jobs through counselling may be greater there than in some other parts of the country?

Mr. Clarke: I appreciate that extremely valid remark, which is particularly relevant to my hon. Friend's constituency, where the problem is finding sufficiently skilled people to maintain the expansion of firms.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): My right hon. and learned Friend is to be congratulated on his valuable statement. Will he ensure that the extra funds available to the BTA have a compensatory balance factor to allow for adverse fluctuations in sterling? Will he also ensure that attractions are stimulated in Yorkshire and the north of England to draw more tourists away from London and the south? Will my right hon. and learned Friend further ensure that the grants given under section 4 are dealt with speedily so that we can get new jobs into place as soon as possible?

Mr. Clarke: If my hon. Friend had asked my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer a few moments ago whether any of the public spending provision could be made subject to movement in the exchange rates, he would not have got a sympathetic answer. It is impossible in public finance to budget on that basis. I am, however, sympathetic to my hon. Friend's point about the present uneven distribution of job opportunities in tourism and leisure. The Government intend to bear that in mind when discussing how the money should be distributed.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I am sure that these measures will be welcomed in parts of the north-west with high long-term unemployment. Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the good reception being given locally to a pilot scheme in Bolton to provide guaranteed jobs for those who have been out of work for three years or longer?

Mr. Clarke: I am aware of that and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for keeping me in close touch with the progress of that pilot scheme, which will have a much wider interest if its success continues.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that in the Lake District, we realise that thousands of genuine jobs depend on tourism? Will he ensure that the extra resources available do not go to Hull but come to places such as the Lake District where we are not snide and sneering about such jobs?

Mr. Clarke: I have known Labour local authorities who disbursed their public funds according to the majorities of their members in different parts of the local authority area. The Government do not do that. They are as concerned with the unemployed people in Hull as they are with those in the Lake District. Nevertheless, we propose to make good use of the funds available.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept my congratulations on the extremely interesting package he has announced today? When will he introduce legislation which is directly relevant to small businesses and to local enterprise agencies?

Mr. Clarke: We do not need primary legislation for any part of the package that I have announced today, except for the changes on redundancy rebate. The other parts will be brought into effect as soon as possible.

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): I too welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement. Will he address himself to two problems? First, in areas such as

Bristol, places on existing youth training schemes have not been filled. A similar point was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts). Secondly, will my right hon. and learned Friend consider contacting companies that are announcing substantial expansion, to which the Opposition have not referred, such as Peugeot in Coventry, Farm Machinery in Doncaster and Nissan in the north-east, and ensure that they consider expanding the number of training places? The Government should assist with those places.

Mr. Clarke: There is a surplus of youth training scheme places in most localities. It is important to retain some surplus because it gives more choice to would-be trainees, enables us to match their individual needs and gives some flexibility. Although we must ensure that we are not financing more places than necessary, the surplus gives us an opportunity to raise the quality of the training.

I note what my hon. Friend said about new firms and agree that the Government must ensure that the many firms that are expanding should be enabled to increase their contribution towards the training effort.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that extra help for tourism and small businesses, will be very welcome in my constituency? Will the expansion of the community programme allow him to consider removing the anomaly of those who are long-term unemployed and not drawing social security benefit — often because they have a working wife—not being allowed to apply for a place on the community programme?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is important to recognise that in a modern, developed economy such as ours, positive steps must be taken to accelerate the growth of new jobs in small business, through self-employment and in new industries such as tourism and leisure. The Opposition too often look back to the traditional pattern of industry where their political base used to lie. That is why they are so resistant to developments in those areas.

The Government continue to review the benefit rule in relation to access to the community programme. It is important that there are rules to enable the Government to target the opportunities of the community programme on those who have been unemployed principally because they have lost a previous job.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): May I warmly congratulate the Paymaster General—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—on his discovery that people who have been unemployed become demoralised by their inability to find work? Will the Paymaster General ensure that that revelation is passed on to the chairman and vice-chairman of the Conservative party?

Will the Paymaster General explain to the House what he meant when he said in his statement that the job start scheme will be concentrated on people on high rates of benefit? Does this mean that those who have been unemployed for a long time will not qualify for this new scheme? Will the people who qualify for this new scheme receive family income supplement? Are not the Government simply switching resources from one area to another?

Mr. Clarke: We tested the scheme's effectiveness within pilot areas and all those who have been unemployed for more than 12 months will be eligible for this new payment. The hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) mentioned the impact that will have on taxation, family income supplement and other matters affecting the beneficiary. All these matters will be dealt with in a more detailed statement as soon as possible. The Government's aim is that all those people will receive an additional £20 in their pockets to enable them to move from benefit to employment.

My "discovery" is not a new one. While looking at the Opposition during the statement by the Chancellor and during my own statement, I discovered that there is a growing sense of demoralisation among some under-employed ex-Ministers on the Opposition Benches. Perhaps they will be able to take advantage of the services offered by the Government.

Paymaster General (Reference to Member)

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order concerns the Paymaster General, who has just been answering questions. I hope his answers to questions were not as remote from reality as his remarks about me in the House at Question Time a fortnight ago. The Minister was endeavouring to answer a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I think the Minister was rather stung about it, as he got carried away. The Minister is usually a smooth operator with a fatal facility for words, but he pushed himself into a position he could not get out of. He said——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The point of order should be addressed to me and it is difficult for me to answer for the Minister.

Mr. Flannery: Mr. Speaker, what the Minister said has caused me a great deal of inconvenience. It was quoted in the press and if the Minister had said it outside the House, I would have sued him. It was quoted in the press. I will read what he said:

"I notice that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) has just taken his place."

When he said that—I do not know whether his eyes are bad—I was in a school in Dusseldorf in West Germany studying primary education.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman lingered within the same idiom, to which he seems to be addicted, in the same way that I am addicted to Question Time in the House. He said:

"If he had been here sooner, instead of engaging in some part-time occupation, his earlier question could have been answered."
—[*Official Report* 29 October 1985; Vol. 84, c. 804.]

That has caused me a good deal of inconvenience. It was in my local press, a very Right-wing Tory press that does not like me and which I assume likes the right hon. and learned Gentleman, although it seems to have a certain affection for my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I should like an apology from the right hon. and learned Gentleman and a confession that he was as remote from reality then as he was when he answered questions this afternoon.

The Paymaster General (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Further to the point of order. I hoped that I had sorted out that unfortunate matter in a letter which I wrote to the hon. Gentleman last week, which I said he could use quite freely and publicly. I regret that he was caused embarrassment locally by the serious reporting by his local newspaper of a frivolous incident in the House, which was not accurately reported in *Hansard*. I do not blame the *Hansard* reporter because it was difficult to hear what was being said at the time, but the remark to which the hon. Gentleman takes particular objection was aimed at the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). He had just slipped into his place and I was engaged in an exchange with him. I can tell the difference between the hon. Members for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) and for Bolsover. I can confirm, if it helps with his local newspaper, that both are most assiduous in their attendance and that both make themselves only too readily apparent when they are here at Question Time. The hon. Member for Hillsborough had not been in his place for a question earlier on but I accept that that was because he was unavoidably absent on parliamentary business with his Select Committee.

Mr. Speaker: Honour is satisfied. I think that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) has received a generous apology.

TSB (Scotland) Sale (Judgment)

5.24 pm

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The Davidson judgment in the Court of Session in the TSB (Scotland) sale

The Prime Minister, as the First Lord of the Treasury, must have known today that the Treasury is to appeal against the Trustee Savings Bank ruling by a Scottish judge that the assets of the bank belong to its depositors. I recognise that there is a difficulty, but this is a matter of considerable importance in Scotland and in the kingdom as a whole. Throughout the consideration of the Trustee Savings Banks Bill, which I followed closely, Treasury Ministers insisted on the Government's neutrality. In the absence of an adequate statement by Ministers today and the apparent contradiction in the announcement by a Treasury spokesman that the Government intend to appeal, I ask you, Mr. Speaker, earnestly to consider a debate.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the Davidson judgment in the Court of Session on the TSB (Scotland) sale."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Member for Maryhill has said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

BILL PRESENTED

Dockyard Services

Mr. Secretary Heseltine, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Brittan, Mr. Secretary Younger, Mr. Secretary Baker, Mr. John Moore and Mr. Norman Lamont presented a Bill to make provision in connection with any arrangements that may be made by the Secretary of State for or with a view to the provision by contractors of certain dockyard services: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 9.]

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I propose to put together the 11 motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Undertaking between the Secretary of State for Scotland and Regionfields Ltd. trading as Easdale Island Shipping Line be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Pushchairs (Safety) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Legal Aid (Scotland) (Financial Conditions) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Legal Advice and Assistance (Scotland) (Financial Conditions) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Oil Pollution) (Amendment) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Legal Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) Regulations 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 1614) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) Regulations 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 1615) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Employment Subsidies Act 1978 (Renewal) (Great Britain) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Dental Auxiliaries (Amendment) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (No. 2) Order 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 1630) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Redundancy Payments (Local Government) (Modification) (Amendment) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c. — *[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[FIFTH DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [6 November].

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament—*[Sir Reginald Eyre]*:—

Question again proposed.

Industry and Employment

Mr. Speaker: May I again make an appeal for brief contributions in the Queen's Speech debate? No fewer than 33 right hon. and hon. Members have shown their interest. I have no authority to limit speeches to 10 minutes between 6 o'clock and 8 o'clock or between 7 o'clock and 9 o'clock but I hope, as was the case yesterday, that voluntary restraint will be shown so that as many right hon. and hon. Members as possible may be called to make contributions to this important debate.

5.26 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I beg to move, at the end of the Question, to add:

"But humbly regrets that the Gracious Speech proposes no change in policies which have caused record levels of unemployment, a growing and alarming deficit in Britain's balance of trade in manufactured goods, and a continuing erosion of Britain's industrial base, includes privatisation measures which will cause the forced sale at cheap prices of valuable national assets and increased unemployment, and seeks to remove the statutory protection afforded by Wages Councils in order to impose further cuts in the wages of the lowest paid."

In the amendment we seek to draw attention to the facts about Britain's industry and economy, about the real nature of the Government's proposals in the Gracious Speech and about their real meaning and implication. I emphasise the need for reality because it seems that in many ways the Government have become totally disconnected from reality. The Chancellor's autumn statement has confirmed that provisional view.

A growing body of opinion in this country — including chambers of commerce, the Select Committee of another place and distinguished economists and correspondents—emphasises what the Opposition have been saying for many years: that there is a serious crisis facing this country, particularly its manufacturing industry. It agrees that there has been what can only be called a terrible retrenchment of manufacturing industry in this country since 1979. It confirms that there is a growing and appalling deficit in the balance of trade in manufactured goods and that as more time goes by we realise with frightening clarity the missed opportunity of North sea oil and the problems that are being opened up now that North sea oil is in the peak year of its production.

There is a curiosity in the Government's approach to manufacturing industry. No doubt we will hear this further when the Secretary of State replies. All Government statistics about the economy and particularly about industry start in 1981. We are always told that there has been an increase in output or investment or whatever the criteria are. The statistics all start at what the Government call the trough of the recession in 1981. Who do they think were the Government between 1979 and 1981 when massive damage was done to Britain's industry and about 20 per cent. of our manufacturing capacity was wiped out? They cannot try, by some statistical sleight of hand, to pretend that they were not the Government for the first two years of their period of office.

As one knows, it is very easy to show that figures are improving if one compares them with the lowest ever figures in our history. If one is taken to the bottom of the valley, it is relatively easy to make it look as though one is making steady progress up the hill. That is the substance of the Government's statistical manipulation. Manufacturing output is still 10 per cent. below the level at which it stood in 1979 when they took office. We have lost not only jobs but markets and industries and whole areas of economic endeavour.

It was therefore remarkable to hear the Prime Minister refer last night at the Mansion house to the renewal of this country's assets. What does she see as she travels around the country? Does she see a country that is being renewed? Through some curious prejudice, the Prime Minister never travels by rail. I understand that she has never been on a British Rail train since she became Prime Minister. When one travels around the country by rail one sees with startling clarity the devastated areas. If the Prime Minister and her colleagues made a few journeys by rail, they would see clearly, as those who have been away from this country for some time tell us, how awful the devastation is. Those hon. Members who represent industrial areas do not need to be told by visitors to this country what has happened to British industry.

Since 1979, output in Japan has increased by 20 per cent. It has increased by 10 per cent. in the United States, by 6 per cent. in France and by 4·3 per cent. in West Germany. In the United Kingdom is has increased by 3·9 per cent. However, we should look a little more carefully at the United Kingdom figures. Over half the rise in United Kingdom output is the direct result of higher North sea oil output. During that period, it increased from 1·8 per cent. to 4 per cent. of our gross domestic product.

Can the Government claim the credit for North sea oil? The Conservative party was not in office when investment was made in the North sea oilfields. That investment created the greatest windfall that any Government have inherited in the 20th century. Apart from oil, the increase in United Kingdom output has averaged 1·3 per cent.— a pitiful figure for a Government who have been in office since 1979. None of the countries that I have mentioned has the benefit of North sea oil. We compete with European countries which do not enjoy the benefit of Government revenues in terms of the balance of trade, the balance of payments and the employment that North sea oil has brought to this country.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Why does the right hon. and learned Gentleman insist upon the North sea oil argument? If he were applying the same logic to the American economy would he exclude their grain exports?

Mr. Smith: North sea oil production and the revenues to be obtained from it happened in 1979. This will not last for ever. There has been grain production in the United States for a very long time and one expects it to remain for a very long time. The hon. Gentleman does not seem to have grasped the point that North sea oil is a temporary phenomenon—sadly so for this country.

Mr. Forman: What does the right hon. and learned Gentleman mean by "temporary"?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman should read what he has obviously not read: the evidence given by the Treasury and the Department of Energy to the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade, which shows that 1985 represents the peak of North sea oil revenues and that from now onwards oil revenues will diminish. The Government have grossly over-produced North sea oil. They have been pushing it out of the North sea as though it were going out of style. They need North sea oil revenues to pay for the unemployment that they have created. The devastating verdict of history upon this Government's economic management will be that they have used every penny piece of our North sea oil revenues to pay for the extra unemployment that they have created since 1979.

The figure can be easily calculated. Every person who is unemployed costs at least £6,000. The Government have to pay social security benefit to the unemployed and they lose income tax, national insurance contributions and value added tax. If only 2 million more people are unemployed — of course, more than 2 million extra people are now unemployed — the cost of their unemployment is £12 billion, which is roughly the amount of North sea oil revenues for the last year. That will not be the amount in the coming year, because of the difference in the relationship of sterling to the dollar. It can be proved beyond doubt that that is where the oil revenues have gone.

If somebody had stood on an election platform in 1979 and said that if a Conservative Government were elected, there would be 3·5 million people unemployed, he would have been booed off that platform for exaggerating. If he had stood on the same platform and said that a Conservative Government would use the North sea oil revenues not to make tax cuts or for public expenditure investment but exclusively for the unemployment that would be created in the years to come, he would also have been booed off the platform. But that is what has happened since 1979. It is the direct result of the Government's policies. Industry has wilted under the combination of high interest rates and high exchange rates. British industry has been placed in a monetarist straitjacket which makes our goods uncompetitive abroad and deters investment in this country.

The Government say that there has been a small increase in investment in manufacturing industry. This is because regional grants and capital allowances are coming to an end and many companies are rushing to get in their applications in time. Therefore, there will be a temporary upward blip in the figures. However, from 1987 onwards the incentives will have been removed and there will be a return to the downward trend.

The worst feature of running high interest rates and high exchange rates at the same time is that they reinforce each other in a vicious spiral. High interest rates, which are the result of the Government's monetarist policies, contribute to the high exchange rate by attracting funds from around the world, thus forcing up the value of sterling. The truth is that the Chancellor of the Exchequer runs financial policies that pay no attention to the needs of manufacturing industry. Day by day, more and more industrial managers are realising this and are saying so. In the meantime, there is a huge outflow of funds from this country to provide investment for the equipment of our competitors. We are providing them with resources so that their workers can have the equipment with which to beat us in our own markets and in Third world markets.

Nevertheless, we are told by Government representatives that to concentrate upon manufacturing industry is a mistake—that we need to concentrate on services. But do they not know, as witness after witness from British industry told the Select Committee on Overseas Trade of another place, that to a large extent the service sector is dependent upon manufacturing industry? Do they not know that only 20 per cent. of our services are internationally tradeable? I am not against services. This country should have as lively a service sector as possible, but we shall not solve unemployment or replace the wealth-creating capacity of our disappearing industries by imagining that this country can live off North sea oil revenues, an expanding service sector and a few profitable industrial centres.

In evidence to the Select Committee, Lord Weinstock said:

"what will the service industries be servicing when there is no hardware, when no wealth is actually being produced? We shall be servicing, presumably, the production of wealth by others. We shall supply the Changing of the Guard, we will supply the Beefeaters around the Tower of London. We will become a curiosity. I do not think that is what Britain is about; I think that is rubbish."

I think all hon. Members would say, "Hear, hear," to Lord Weinstock.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman referring to the Lord Weinstock who seems to be accruing cash within GEC and not investing it in manufacturing?

Mr. Smith: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has drawn attention to the fact that the result of the Government's policies is that Lord Weinstock can make more money by not investing in manufacturing industry. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not think that he has helped his Government by that intervention.

In the meantime, our trade deficit in manufactured goods increases relentlessly. From a very large surplus in 1980, we are heading in 1985 for a £5 billion deficit in the balance of trade in manufactured goods. The Government appear to be completely oblivious to this. In opening the debate on the Gracious Speech, the Prime Minister concentrated on the slight increase in manufactured exports. There was not a word about imports. How one can talk about trade without referring to exports and imports beggars belief.

Everyone who thinks seriously about this matter is worried about what will happen when North sea oil runs out and we have an appalling deficit in our balance of trade in manufactured goods. In evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade, Treasury officials answered that question, presumably with the authority of Ministers. The witnesses said that the gradual decline in North sea oil output would automatically bring about an adjustment in the economy which will compensate for the

[Mr. Smith]

loss. As North sea oil output increased, the value of the pound would fall against the other currencies, thus making British goods and services more competitive overseas and improving our balance in non-fuel trade. The witnesses said that the services section would increase and sunrise industries would replace the so-called sunset industries. So we need not worry—the economy will change inevitably and almost automatically. There will be a compensating adjustment, so we can put our fears at rest.

The Government say, "The only people who are asking these questions are those who are seeking to be difficult." The problem with that rosy view of Britain's future is that the connection between North sea oil and the exchange rate is not as automatic as was assumed. Those who wonder about that should look at the evidence given to the Select Committee by the Bank of England. The problem is also that there is no automaticity about replacing so-called sunset industries with sunrise industries. Almost half our balance of trade deficit in manufactured goods is in the information technology industries which are supposed to be at the forefront of the sunrise sector. We cannot necessarily look for salvation there.

Above all, the complacent prophets do not understand that if the industrial base has been disastrously weakened and large parts of it have been destroyed, the capacity of manufacturing industry to respond to a favourable exchange rate and to create wealth on the scale required by the decline in oil will be in serious doubt. We may have all the favourable situations for an expansion in industry but, if there is no industry to expand, it will profit us little. To read the Gracious Speech is to read the words of a Government who seem to be completely unaware of that fact.

The Gracious Speech did not mention the unemployment problem. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) will deal in detail with unemployment measures and the attempt through wages council legislation to force more people into part-time, low-paid jobs. The Government's campaign — it has been orchestrated throughout the whole establishment—to suggest that substantial numbers of the unemployed do not want to work or are not genuinely seeking work is contemptible. *[Interruption.]* I hear a mutter from an hon. Gentleman who has not yet identified himself. I do not know who said that, but I distinctly heard an hon. Member say, "It is true." That is typical of the Conservatives.

Those who have had the guts to identify themselves include Michael Edwardes. He said that he thought that many people were not willing to work. He has made more money out of not working during the last month or two than anyone else in Britain. He just sits there in job after job which he has taken over, collecting large golden handshakes. He put a fair number of people into unemployment while he was involved in managing British industry.

Best of all among those Conservatives who have identified themselves is the deputy chairman of the Conservative party—that "second among equals"—who told us in his celebrated speech that young people had to get off their butts. During the past two weeks, Labour Members, including my right hon. Friends the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), have been challenged to dissociate themselves from the remarks of various members of our party. I ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to dissociate himself unequivocally from the remarks of the deputy chairman of the Conservative party. The Prime Minister and other Members of Cabinet have refused to do so.

This is a chance for the right hon. and learned Gentleman to dissociate himself from those remarks. If he does not, we shall know that all the Conservatives believe that, on the principle of collective responsibility, if on no other basis, young people should get off their butts and look for work. I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will take advantage of this magnanimous opportunity to put the record straight — *[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Paymaster General, who are both Queen's counsel, can probably give each other the advice they deserve. I shall see what the Secretary of State makes of that advice when he gets the opportunity.

The Secretary of State has just taken office. His move was unexpected. As lawyers would say, it was not "reasonably foreseeable" that there would be a chain of events that would end up with the right hon. and learned Gentleman occupying his present position. He is being as cheerful about it as he can. He is entitled to be cheerful because he was not demoted. As he well knows, he was promoted from the Home Office to Trade and Industry.

One of the first things the Secretary of State did on being promoted was express concern about regional development policy. He said that, as he came from a northern constituency, he knew the problems especially well, implying that there would be changes in regional development policy now that he was at the helm. There is plenty of room for change. The whole of regional development policy was being destroyed while the right hon. and learned Gentleman was at the Home Office doing damage in other directions. I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will take the opportunity to announce a series of initiatives and will tell us that the Government's policy is to spread prosperity fairly, especially in his constituency.

I hope that the Secretary of State will say something about the steel industry. No other industry in Britain in recent years has been reduced so drastically and no work force has faced such penalties. There are no greater monuments to inactivity than the deserted steelworks. I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will confirm the Government's policy of maintaining the five main steel-making plants. I am sorry that the Government gives them a guarantee for only three years. I do not know why the Government cannot give a longer guarantee. *[Interruption.]* The Government may think that it is unreasonable to give a guarantee for longer than three years. They may be taking account of the life of a Government. I do not think that it is too much to tell an industry that it is secure for the next three years.

Planning in the steel industry has been based on the assumption — this is clear in the rationale for the decision on the Gartcosh steelworks—that there will be no increase in demand for steel during the 1980s and 1990s. A flat projection has been put forward. If the Secretary of State agrees, let us have no more nonsense about there being no prospective revival of manufacturing industry. If the British Steel Corporation's assumptions are true, the Government's promises are false. I hope that the Secretary of State will meet that point head on and will think again about Gartcosh. He must know by now from

the opinion that has welled up not only in the area directly affected but throughout Scotland — many Conservative Members who share his political views feel this way — that the proposed closure of Gartcosh is a dagger aimed at the heart of the future survival of the Ravenscraig steelworks.

The Government say that we must prove that the closure of Gartcosh will harm Ravenscraig. We say that we cannot take a cold rolling mill out of the middle of an integrated steel-making complex and expect it to be as healthy, vigorous and successful as it was before that surgical operation. One does not need a series of facts and figures to make that point—it is the simplest of points. Gartcosh is not a separate plant but an integral part of the complex. No one part of the country has suffered uniquely — steelworks in Wales, Shotton, Sheffield and the north-east have suffered because of the decline in the steel industry. The time has surely come for us to draw an El Alamein line around those important industries and say that there will be no more retreats. This country must have a future as a manufacturing country, and without its basic industries it cannot do so.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Is it not true that much of the decline in the steel industry has been brought about by the contraction of the motor car industry, and that a great deal of that contraction is due to the wrecking tactics of trade unions involved in that industry, orchestrated by the Labour party?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman seeks to blame everything in this country on the trade unions. That was the Government's tactic for a long time. Government apologists wondered whether they should say things were bad and the fault of the trade unions or quite good after all. We seem to be on the latter tack at the moment. I do not take the hon. Gentleman's intervention seriously, and I shall explain why when I deal with the motor car industry, which is another of our fundamental industries.

I hope that the Secretary of State will pay attention to the report of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs when it reports. I do not know what the report will contain, but the Committee has taken a great deal of important evidence. I hope that it will be possible for him to take note of it and for us to discuss it in the House before any irrevocable decisions are taken. On that matter, as with some others, the Government should resolve to listen to representations. This is still a democratic country, at least in form. They should listen with care and attention, especially when a broad section of opinion speaks loudly, vigorously and with obvious sincerity and tells us that the Government are wrong. It does not need a major adjustment of Government policy to make a significant change in that direction. That is not the only matter upon which I believe the Government have been negligent.

As the hon. Gentleman reminded me, I shall deal with the motor car industry, with which we face a serious problem. I should like the Secretary of State to tell us what he will do about the continuing policy of General Motors (Vauxhall) to import cars on every conceivable occasion and import parts for those assembled in this country, so to a large extent the operations of General Motors (Vauxhall) are a mere screwdriver operation.

I am aware that the Secretary of State has voiced his complaints, because I understand that the emissaries sent from the Department of Trade and Industry to the company did not receive a happy reception. That company has decided that it will follow the policy of its own economic advantage. The Secretary of State knows perfectly well that if such a policy is allowed to continue we shall have no chance of stemming our balance of trade deficit.

I hope that the Secretary of State will make General Motors (Vauxhall) decide to keep some of the promises that it gave the trade unions in 1983 — that it would increase production at Ellesmere Port to 35 cars a day. It is now only 24 a day. I hope that the Government will take some action.

I hope that the Government will bear in mind the fact that they are not powerless to deal with multinational companies. The Bedford vans which are supplied to the Ministry of Defence are an important contract for that company. I do not see why the Government should favour companies that follow policies inimical to our economic health by awarding them favourable contracts.

On the subject of trade, I hope that the Government will pay close attention to ensuring that British exporters are sufficiently backed in world competitive markets. I hope that some lessons have been learned from the Bosporus bridge affair. It is widely accepted by all those involved in the sad saga of that contract that if the Government had offered at the beginning of the process the assistance to British companies which they eventually offered at the end, the contract would have been secured. One does not need to say more than that to show that the matter needs to be reviewed.

The supply of vehicles to the Bangkok mass transit authority is another important contract for this country's vehicle industry. I read today in the *Financial Times* that there is a further difficulty about obtaining that contract. All sorts of problems may be involved.

I hope that the matter will be pressed vigorously by the Government. The knowledge that an important contract, which at the beginning amounted to 4,000 single and double decker buses to be supplied by British Leyland, had been in the air for a long time as the company pursued it, makes it hard to understand why the Prime Minister did not choose to visit Bangkok on her south-east Asia visit. If it were the French Government who were seeking the contract, the French President would have been there before any decision was made by the Government. I understand that the Minister of Trade visited Bangkok the week after the Cabinet had reached its adverse decision. It might have been a little more intelligent to go the week before. If I am wrong about that, I can be corrected, but I believe that I am correct when I say that the Prime Minister did not go to Thailand during her visit to south-east Asia.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): The right hon. and learned Gentleman may, like me, have read some press reports which suggested that the Prime Minister's recent intervention in the Ptarmigan deal was unhelpful. There is a view that in many major contracts abroad, whether public or private, the intervention of senior politicians does not help. That is an important point. What is the right hon. and learned Gentleman's view?

Mr. Smith: What struck me as odd about the Ptarmigan deal was the way in which the Prime Minister prostrated herself in an undignified fashion to obtain it. She left herself open to the result, which was an undignified rebuff.

[Mr. Smith]

The hon. Gentleman makes a serious point. We may have a Prime Minister who is not helpful in pursuing Britain's trade. If that is so, the most palatable member of the Government should be selected to be the emissary. If I were to ask the hon. Gentleman to select the most palatable member of the Government to do that, he would be in difficulty. I find it nearly impossible. If not in the Cabinet, there must be someone in the junior ranks who could do the job with reasonable success.

I hope that the Secretary of State will find some time to tell us what will happen in the negotiations for the renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement. Those of us who have taken part in the discussions in the House—it is almost a year since they started—about the renewal of the MFA have been staggered by the Government's laid-back approach. They have wound themselves up with great difficulty to ask for a renewal of the MFA.

The Secretary of State must know that the British attitude is crucial to the European attitude because the United Kingdom is in a pivotal position within the European Community between the unlimited free traders and those who believe that there must be some orderly marketing for textiles. I hope that the Secretary of State will take that point seriously, because there are 250,000 jobs in the British textile and clothing industries. That is a heavy responsibility for any Government to carry when taking part in international negotiations. I hope that we shall return to that subject. The Government's discharge of their responsibilties will be monitored with great care by the Opposition.

I have talked about what the Government have not done. Unfortunately, I must deal with some of the things that they propose to do, because one of their main themes is privatisation, especially that of the British gas industry. The Secretary of State for Energy told us some time ago that there were three reasons for the privatisation of British Gas. The first was that there should be an end to state intervention in the industry's affairs. Secondly, there should be an end to what was called "nominal public ownership", which was to be translated into what he called "real public ownership". Thirdly, there was to be an improvement in efficiency.

It was interesting to note that there was no reference to competition. That is often used by the Government usually incorrectly as justification for privatisation. Even the Secretary of State for Energy is aware that there cannot be any competition when we are dealing with a necessary monopoly that has a pipe system running throughout the country, such as the British gas industry. We have been told that we must privatise to stop state intervention, and that is a bit too much to accept.

Who has intervened more in the British gas industry and manipulated its finances more than the Government? Which Government forced the British Gas Corporation to increase its prices by 10 per cent. above the level of inflation for three years in succession? That was meddling in the affairs of the British Gas Corporation. We do not need to privatise to stop that happening. We need merely to enter into a self-denying ordinance not to continue those manipulations. As the Secretary of State is aware, it was a clever political game.

By the use of the gas levy, about £1 billion a year was extracted from the gas industry. It was a tax on the gas user and identified and known as a tax, but one for which in the normal way the permission of Parliament was not obtained. The Prime Minister is adept at leaving responsibility on the doorsteps of others, and the odium for the increase went to a public corporation which she dislikes intensely on ideological grounds. It was a smart but disreputable manoeuvre and one which is being perpetuated.

Can the Secretary of State tell us whether the gas levy will be maintained after the British Gas Corporation is privatised? What will be said about that when an offer of sale is made? He knows perfectly well that if he announces the continuation of the gas levy, that will have a considerable effect on the price. He knows also that if the gas levy is not maintained the money will have to be made up by taxation from some other source. We will listen with great care to what the Secretary of State says about that.

There are some serious questions to be asked about employees' rights and conditions, which are likely to be diminished. The notion that I find most offensive is that somehow state ownership of the British Gas Corporation is only nominal. There was an unseemly dispute between the Earl of Stockton and the Secretary of State for Energy about where the family silver was going. The noble Earl got it right, but in came the Secretary of State for Energy seeking to dissociate himself from the very man he introduced and applauded at the meeting at which the speech was made. Characteristically, it was a case of the Secretary of State for Energy appearing in two places simultaneously, urging on the Tory Reform Group and speedily dissociating himself from any remarks which might be to his political harm.

He said that the family silver would be handed back to the family, but what was our experience with British Telecom? In that case the family was regarded as international and there were special allocations of shares in the United States and Japan; 18·6 per cent. of the shareholding of British Telecom is now in the hands of overseas investors who made £180 million in one day as the shares traded up from 50p to 94p. No Government in history have handed to overseas investors £180 million in one day's operations.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): It may interest the right hon. and learned Gentleman to know that exactly 39 years ago today, during the debate on the Loyal Address, Winston Churchill described as a preposterous fraud the intention of the then Labour Government to nationalise the gas industry. The surprise is not that we are privatising the gas industry but that it has actually taken us 39 years to denationalise it.

Mr. Smith: I am not sure that that intervention adds much to the debate, because the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that in the 39 years that have passed we have created a highly successful gas industry that is a credit to the nation. It is extremely well managed. It has been monitored by all sorts of bodies, such as the Monopolies Commission, and in comparison with other companies, both public and private, it has come out extremely well. It has carried out a massive transition from being a manufacturing industry to being a processing and distribution industry. It has laid pipelines from one end of this country to the other, supplies British industry at competitive prices and provides cheap fuel for the domestic user. The British gas industry has a proud record of success and it is deeply unpatriotic to attack it for the

narrow ideological reasons given by the hon. Gentleman. When one scratches the so-called patriots on the Government Benches one finds that just below the Union Jack there is a hand outstretched to grab the quickest profits that can be found.

The Government are shamelessly raiding the public treasury. It is not good enough for them to talk about handing away the silver. The truth of the matter is that it is not nominal, but crucial to public finance. What will happen to our public finances if we give away the right to profits of £1 billion every year from the British Gas Corporation? That profit and the right to earn it will be sold with the shares. As my right hon. Friend the Shadow Chancellor said earlier, the profit will not be lost for just one, two or three years; that money will be lost in perpetuity to the public exchequer. In the waste of North sea oil and in the sale of assets, we are seeing a double blow to public financing.

It is not as if the money will be invested elsewhere in other income-producing assets, because it has been heavily signalled and is in the Gracious Speech that it is intended for tax cuts. That will build up a huge election fund for the Conservative party. That is why the British Gas Corporation, with assets of £16,000 million and profits of over £1,000 million, will be sold, for £8,000 million most likely, and if the sale is on the same scale as the sale of British Telecom, the payment to the bankers will be £300 million. It cost over £200 million to sell off British Telecom. The result of this seedy and shameful operation is that a major British asset will be handed over to who knows who. One does not know who will eventually buy it. Of course it will be said that it is going to the people, but it is going to only some of the people. All the people benefit from the profits of the British Gas Corporation.

This is an increasingly seedy and shameful Government. They are mishandling the economy, destroying our industry and leaving a terrible inheritance for their successors. If I have one reservation about helping the next Labour Government, it is the magnitude of the task they will face as a result of the depredations of this Government. Sooner or later we will need to plan for the long-term recovery of our industry. We will need to encourage investment in real jobs, and it will be necessary to start again the process of building up our investment, our research and development, and our education and training. The time cannot come soon enough.

6.8 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Leon Brittan): We have heard a great deal from the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) about the parlous state of our industry and commerce. We have also heard some flights of fancy about patriotism. My estimate is that the right hon. and learned Gentleman believes in approximately one quarter of what he has said. As ever, the Labour party seems to take enormous delight in running down the state of Britain. That relish might be forgiven if what was said gave a fair picture of the British economy. It does not. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer described many aspects of what is actually happening in the country.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman tried to make out that the successes, which he says are comparatively recent and the nature of which he does not really deny, are based purely on earnings from North sea oil. He said that will disappear and, therefore, we can claim no credit for the achievements which, again, he does not really attempt to deny. He claims it is North sea oil alone which is preventing us from plunging into bankruptcy. That is simply not true. The profitability of non-North sea industrial and commercial companies, at a net real return on capital of 6·5 per cent., is at the highest level since 1978.

Manufacturing productivity has been growing at an average rate of 6 per cent. for nearly five years. We are not talking there about North sea oil. Total fixed investments last year stood at £55 billion—an all-time high. Of course, we are all perfectly well aware of and need no reminders or lectures about what happened during the recession. We are recovering from a low point, but in the British economy today the dramatic growth in investment is the most eloquent testimony to the confidence of British business men that the current growth in output is sustainable. Business investment rose 15·5 per cent. in real terms last year, to reach an all-time high.

An investment intention survey, carried out by the Department of Trade and Industry, forecast that business investment this year is expected to rise by a further 8 per cent. to reach a new record level. The right hon. and learned Gentleman produced all sorts of reasons for believing that will come to an end; that the past has to be ignored and the future discounted; but the present is reality and that reality is the investment that I have described. That completely belies the thesis that our current improvement depends first on North sea oil and that, as North sea oil revenues decline, our fortunes will decline in parallel.

North sea oil has indeed provided enormous benefits for the British economy, but it is absurd to give it the role that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has given it. It has not in any sense been wasted. It has brought new prosperity to many areas in Scotland and formed the basis of an offshore supplies industry which will continue to earn money for Britain overseas long after our domestic oil reserves have run out.

North sea oil has made a massive contribution to the balance of payments. It has provided money to the Treasury—[*Interruption.*] There is nothing wrong with that, as I am sure the right hon. and learned Gentleman found when he was in government. It is ludicrous to ignore the contribution of North sea oil to our economy and to our investment just because the new roads, hospitals and sewers that have been—and will be—built are not labelled "Built out of the proceeds of North sea oil." They could not have been built on anything like the present scale without it.

Of course the oil will not last for ever—it is a finite resource; that is obvious—but to go on to claim that the economy will be unable to readjust to declining oil production is simply unwarranted. Nor is any useful purpose served by exaggerating, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman does by implication, the speed at which oil revenues will decline.

We shall remain self-sufficient in oil until the mid to late 1990s. The rundown in the oil surplus will be gradual, giving the economy time to adjust. Moreover, as a result of North sea oil, we can look forward to a steady flow of earnings resulting from our investments abroad. Those investments will cushion the impact on our economy of the decline of North sea oil and help us to adjust it. Yet it is those very investments that the Labour party says it is

[Mr. Leon Brittan]

determined to destroy by forcing individuals and institutions to repatriate their savings so that they can be squandered on Socialist schemes.

We do not profess to forecast or propose to dictate from which sectors in the economy the main adjustments will come, but one thing is certain: when the non-oil economy arrives, it will not—it is absurd to pretend that it could—be a replica of what existed before North sea oil came on stream. The levels of investment in manufacturing industry that is taking place today makes it quite reasonable to be confident that the manufacturing sector will continue its marked recovery from recession and play a vital part in our economy in the future.

According to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, it is impossible for manufacturing industry to grow because the base has already been destroyed. That statement is completely belied by the figures showing what people in manufacturing industry have been prepared to invest this year and last year.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Does the Secretary of State agree that, if there is to be a marked improvement in the economy, that is exactly the reason for keeping Gartcosh open, so that it will be there to provide the necessary steel?

Mr. Brittan: I will come to Gartcosh in a few moments, if I may.

Dealing with the oil argument, I was going on to say that, for the reasons I have given, it is entirely reasonable to believe that manufacturing industry will continue its recovery, but at the same time services will undoubtedly form an increasing part of our economic activity. The resentment about services, such as the tourist industry, that we saw earlier in the afternoon is not only distasteful but economically illiterate. We would do well to accept that a pound of output or export from the service sector is no less useful or worthwhile than that earned from manufacturing.

The Opposition amendment refers to the level of unemployment. Nobody could dispute that it is far too high; but in this area, too, it is only the Opposition who stubbornly refuse to recognise the encouraging signs that are emerging. As has already been pointed out, in the past two and a half years the total number of people in work has increased by more than 600,000, and last year we created more jobs than the rest of the European Community put together. I believe that the measures contained in the Gracious Speech will improve the climate for job creation still further. I am not alone in my confidence.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman take this opportunity to dissociate himself from the remarks of Mr. Jeffrey Archer, the deputy chairman of the Tory party, who, in an interview about the young, said that they are

"quite unwilling to put in a day's work. I know what unemployment is like, and a lot of it is getting off your backside and finding a job"?

Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware how offensive those remarks were to the hundreds of thousands of people who are denied the chance of working and who have no chance of finding a job?

Mr. Brittan: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that Mr. Archer has himself commented on those remarks. If the hon. Gentleman is seriously interested in the questions of employment and unemployment which are concerning this House, his reference to remarks of that kind, and dwelling on them in the way that he has, must illustrate that he has reached rock bottom — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. John Smith *rose*——

Mr. Brittan: The Opposition are manifestly becoming restive because I am pointing out some uncomfortable facts about the good news in the economy and the increase in the number of jobs.

I have to tell the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East and the Opposition that I am not alone in my confidence about British economic prospects. It is a confidence which is shared by investors the world over. Last year, inward investment into Britain was 86 per cent. up on the figure for the year before. It was the best year for inward investment since the Invest in Britain Bureau was created. Three hundred and twenty separate inward investment projects were confirmed, creating nearly 30,000 new jobs and safeguarding 19,000 others. Last year there were projects which, put together, represented capital expenditure of about £3 billion. Those are the serious points about what is happening in the economy.

Mr. John Smith *rose*——

Mr. Brittan: That level of success is being maintained this year. These figures cannot be manipulated and are entirely dependent upon voluntary decisions taken by overseas investors. Whether the Opposition like it or not, they represent a massive vote of confidence in the future of the British economy and the Government's policies.

When I visited the United States a couple of weeks ago, I found that the only thing that worries potential investors about putting their money into Britain is the thought that one day there might be a Labour Government. Happily, I was able to reassure them that such an event was highly unlikely.

Mr. John Smith: Before the right hon. and learned Gentleman scurries away from Mr. Jeffrey Archer, is not Mr. Archer regarded as a fairly responsible official of the Conservative party, being the deputy chairman and having been appointed by the Prime Minister? Why cannot the Secretary of State give us a simple answer? Does he agree with the disgraceful remarks of the deputy chairman of the Conservative party? If he disagrees with them, can he not dissociate himself from them? Can he not do that simply, honestly and clearly?

Mr. Brittan: I regard it as a sign of the trivialisation of the debate by the Opposition—*[Interruption.]*—that the only point that has excited or interested them in a serious debate on the economy is a statement that Mr. Archer himself has explained very fully and frequently. The right hon. and learned Gentleman should learn that, if he wishes to be taken seriously as a spokesman for the Opposition, he will have to produce something a little more constructive than that. It is significant—the House will not have ignored the fact — that the Archer diversion was raised precisely at the unpalatable moment when the true facts about what is happening to the British economy were being given.

There has been considerable progress not only in industries coming to this country — those overseas choosing to come here in a climate which exists under a

Conservative Government — but in those industries remaining in public ownership for which my Department is responsible.

Let me refer, first, to the British Steel Corporation. I want to deal more generally with the progress of the corporation, but the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East specifically raised Gartcosh. The idea that the Government are not prepared to listen is manifestly untrue, to his knowledge, because he and others of his right hon. and hon. Friends have been to see members of the Government who, I hope, gave them a courteous hearing. Trade union representatives have done the same. It is not sufficient to say that, because we have not been able to accept the points that were made, we are not ready to listen. That is not a fair point.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman talked about Gartcosh being a cold rolling mill which was an essential part of an integrated complex. He will be well aware that the information provided by the British Steel Corporation shows clearly and beyond peraventure that in many parts of the world there are plants doing what Gartcosh does which are much further away from the plant that they serve than Gartcosh is from Ravenscraig.

The assurances that were given in August about Ravenscraig stand, and they are to be taken seriously. I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will accept that and will not be a party to the running down of confidence in Ravenscraig caused solely by claims about the connection between Gartcosh and Ravenscraig which cannot be substantiated.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Can the Secretary of State give an undertaking that the British Steel Corporation will provide answers to the detailed questions put to it by the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs on the specific point about the link between Gartcosh and Ravenscraig?

Mr. Brittan: I understand that the British Steel Corporation will provide more information. As the hon. Gentleman well knows, that must be a matter for the corporation.

I should like to say a word more broadly about the British Steel Corporation, because the future of the steel industry in Scotland, and at Ravenscraig in particular, is dependent upon the future progress of the corporation generally. Enormous progress has been made in turning BSC into a viable and profit-making company. In 1979-80 the British Steel Corporation lost over £1·75 billion, including over £1 billion of excess capacity written off.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West) *rose*——

Mr. Brittan: Those who are concerned about the steel industry should heed the figures. Five years later, in 1984-85, if the effects of the miners' strike and exceptional items are excluded, the British Steel Corporation would have made a profit of £40 million.

Mr. Foulkes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I intervened earlier, the Secretary of State said that he would deal with the point later. My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), who is the constituency Member of Parliament, has not been given an opportunity to ask an important question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that whether a Member gives way is a matter for the hon. Member who is addressing the House.

Mr. Brittan: I was about to give way to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke).

Mr. Tom Clarke: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman and to my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes).

The Secretary of State has referred to Gartcosh. Does he accept that he has so far failed to convince not just the overwhelming majority of the Scottish people but the overwhelming majority of the members of his own party in Scotland? Tomorrow the Minister of State will give evidence to the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. In due course, that Committee will report to the House. Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that he will accept the findings of the Committee?

Mr. Brittan: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that no Goverment have ever said in advance that they will accept the findings of a Select Committee, whatever it may say.

I came to the matter afresh and saw the decisions that were made in August on Ravenscraig. I felt that if I could be persuaded that the connection between Gartcosh and Ravenscraig is as Opposition Members have suggested, that would have to be taken seriously. I considered the matter carefully. I have not been persuaded that there is the link which the hon. Gentleman and others suggest. Those who insist on maintaining that it exists are doing a disservice to Ravenscraig and to the steel industry in Scotland and the United Kingdom generally.

The efforts of the steel industry in Britain, to which I wish to pay tribute, were reflected in the outcome of the European Steel Council at the end of last month in Luxembourg, an outcome which should bring cheer to the whole of the United Kingdom steel industry, public and private. I should like to thank my hon. Friend the Minister of State for his considerable role in achieving that result.

At that meeting, Ministers agreed a tough new regime of severely limiting state aid which should protect all United Kingdom producers against unfair competition from continental competitors. The new quota system represents a significant first step towards a free market in steel. It will be of particular benefit to the BSC. The British steel corporation has had to make use of extensive and uncertain ad hoc arrangements over the last two years to maintain its share of the United Kingdom market at a time when the United Kingdom economy was expanding faster than continental economies. That was unfair. The new quota system will give BSC an extra 360,000 tonnes of quota per year. That should consolidate the position that BSC has achieved following the acquisition of Alphasteel without the need for more ad hoc arrangements.

I should like to pay tribute to all in the industry who have made progress possible. In particular, I greatly admire and warmly applaud the determination of thousands of steel workers to overcome the most intolerable intimidation and abuse to keep the steel works going throughout the miners' strike.

Industry is not a homogeneous entity, nor are the problems the same or of equal gravity in different parts of the country. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was right in recalling what I said at the

[Mr. Brittan]

Conservative party conference about regional policy. It has a vital part to play in our overall economic strategy. It is now almost a year since the new system for administering regional aid was announced. The right hon. and learned Gentleman was right to anticipate that my concern for regional policy would be reflected in considering the impact of that new policy.

Often in the past, money was given to support projects which were highly capital intensive and produced few jobs. In a few cases those projects even resulted in an overall net loss of jobs, while others were certain to go ahead whether or not they received assistance. Clearly that could not be allowed to continue. Regional policy is about creating jobs in the regions. Under the new system it is targeted to ensure that it does just that.

It is still early days to assess the full effect of the changes, but there are some signs already. As a result of the changes, the west midlands was made into an assisted area for the first time. That provided a classic example of the sort of problem that had to be tackled—a highly urbanised area dependent on industrial centres which have declined. I am pleased to say that, to the middle of last month, 538 applications for selective assistance for the west midlands had been received. Of those, 156 have been approved and 147 are being considered. As a result, grants of over £17 million have been approved to assist projects involving a total investment of over £150 million, which will lead to nearly 12,000 jobs being created or safeguarded.

I should also like to mention one arm of our regional policy—the English Industrial Estates Corporation. Its work is an important component of regional policy. The demand for its factories has grown as we have emerged from recession. On the other hand, income from receipts is not expected to be as high as at one time seemed likely. *[Interruption.]* I hear a reference from the Opposition Front Bench to proposals for management buy-out. Those are still being considered, and I have no announcement to make about them today. We are increasing the public expenditure provision for the English Industrial Estates Corporation in 1986-87 to £19·3 million, an increase of over 20 per cent. on the previously announced figure in the public expenditure White Paper of this year.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Is the Secretary of State aware of the great concern in the Medway towns as a result of the reduction of grants to the English Industrial Estates Corporation? Does he accept that the Government have a duty to carry through the full development project in the Medway towns? Will he undertake to make a statement on the matter in the near future? In particular, will he give an undertaking to the House that the grants to the English Industrial Estates Corporation will not be reduced to such an extent that it cannot carry through a proper development project in the Medway towns?

Mr. Brittan: I have said what the position is with regard to the public expenditure provision for the English Industrial Estates Corporation. There is an increase of over 20 per cent. for the coming financial year on the previously announced figure in the public expenditure White Paper. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that what has been said about the Chatham project remains the Government's policy, but I have nothing to add to that.

I refer now to the privatisation measures that seem less than popular to the Opposition. Since taking office we have returned 12 major state-owned companies to the private sector. That has been done not out of reasons of dogma or ideology, but because of the belief, which has been borne out by results in almost every case, that privatisation results in greater efficiency and improved performance. I shall give but one example. In British Aerospace, turnover is up by 73 per cent. compared with the year before privatisation, and profits are up by more than 200 per cent.

However, privatisation has meant not just improved performance. In addition, one third of a million employees have taken the opportunity to become shareholders in the firms for which they work. By doing so, they have taken a stake in the future of those firms and shown a positive commitment to their success. It is for that reason that we are proceeding with privatisation.

There is one proposal in the Gracious Speech to which I should refer because it will be the main item of legislation for the Department of Trade and Industry in the coming Session. It is the proposal to establish a new regulatory framework for the financial services sector. The Bill will be based on the proposals in the White Paper published last January. The approach set out there is designed to enhance the efficiency and competitiveness of that vital sector of the economy while at the same time providing additional safeguards for investors.

So far I have concentrated on domestic matters, but I should like to refer briefly to international trade. It is a prime objective of the Government to seek to maintain and extend the opportunities open to British exporters in world markets. Our crucial opportunity for doing so will be the new round of multilateral trade negotiations in the general agreement on tariffs and trade. In recent years trade restrictions have multiplied and confidence that the rules of GATT will be adhered to has been weakened. It is essential that that process should be reversed. We shall strive, together with our Community partners, to revitalise GATT by negotiating reductions in trade barriers, improving the procedures for settling disputes and ensuring that the rules of the system are more widely observed.

I should like to refer to one other aspect of our trade policy, because I know that it is of particular concern to many hon. Members. Discussions with the financial community on soft loan facilities have been successfully concluded. I should like to announce today important changes in the scope and scale of the aid and trade provision—an instrument effective both in providing aid to developing countries and in helping British companies with overseas contracts. Since its inception, some £350 million of ATP grants have been used with export credits to help British companies with 96 projects, with resulting exports worth £1,700 million. Our intention is to make ATP even more effective in future.

First, with the full co-operation of the financial community, we are introducing a new soft loan facility. Banks will make long-term loans at low interest rates available to recipient countries for financing sound development projects agreed intergovernmentally. The Overseas Development Administration will provide ATP funds to the banks to cover the cost of softening such loans.

Secondly, we are increasing the total level of ATP support to enable British companies to double, by

1988-89, the business currently won annually with ATP. The current annual provision of £66 million is at present offered mainly in 25 per cent. grants securing exports of up to £250 million a year. The new loan facility will enable potential exports won to rise to some £500 million a year. The public expenditure costs of the new facility will usually be in the form of interest top ups to the banks spread over the life of the loans. ATP funds are being increased by £3 million, £10 million and £20 million over the next three years in line with the target of doubling the business won.

The introduction of the soft loan facility is in recognition of the preference of certain developing countries, notably China and Indonesia, for project-related financial packages to be provided in the form of single soft loans rather than in combinations of grants and export credits. The facility will be initially for five years and then reviewed. Initial discussion about a £100 million loan facility has taken place with the Chinese Government. Under such a facility, loans would be at 5 per cent. for 20 years, with a five-year grace period. We shall make suitable arrangements for loans with other developing countries where that would maximise the benefits.

These changes will put our companies on a footing similar to that of their competitors in other countries where the Governments already have the flexibility to provide soft loans. Within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development we shall continue to seek more progress towards multilateral controls over these practices, which other countries have initiated. Our facility will be operated within our international obligations. Our major exporting companies have campaigned strongly for this facility, but the projects won will also benefit the thousands of small and medium-sized companies that act as suppliers and subcontractors. I look forward to a strong response from industry to these changes.

Mr. John Smith: The Opposition welcome the Government's acceptance of the request that has been made for a considerable time by leading British exporters for the introduction of soft loans. While I welcome the Government's conversion to that idea and putting British industry on the same footing as its competitors, why has it to be phased in over three years? The problem is here now. Why must there be a three-year delay?

Mr. Brittan: There will not be a three-year delay. The facility is to be available immediately. The three years to which I referred are the period in which public expenditure will increase. It is not surprising that it should build up over the years. If one introduces the measure tomorrow, it is not surprising that the amount that one spends will be less in the first year than in the second or third. There will be a build-up of projects. I am sorry if the right hon. and learned Gentleman misunderstood, but it was unnecessary for him to introduce a sour note because of his regret that this Government are introducing the measure.

Mr. Smith: It is not my intention to be sour. It was legitimate to say that the measure has been requested for some time. The Secretary of State should be grateful for the fact that I was willing immediately to recognise the advantage that would be gained by certain British exporters. I should like to clarify the point about the three years. We listen with care to what the Secretary of State says. If sufficient requests came in, would there be no cash limiting of any sort and no phasing in over the three years so that, if there were enough projects in the first year, the money would be made available to them?

Mr. Brittan: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is being unreasonable. There is no delay. The scheme is open immediately. To suggest that the amount of money available under it should be unlimited is to ask for something that is absurd. I am talking about doubling the amount that is currently available. The right hon. Gentleman really ought to recognise the magnitude of the change that is being made, rather than make remarks which, if initially not sour, certainly became so.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I welcome the announcement on ATP, but may I ask my right hon. and learned Friend for an assurance that applications in relation to ATP-type funding will be reviewed speedily? How many Departments will be involved in the consideration of ATP?

Mr. Brittan: They will be looked at speedily; but, of course, there is a developmental aspect of it as well as an aspect that is important for British industry. It would be quite wrong not to look at both aspects. We will look at them as quickly as we possibly can. I look forward to a strong response from industry to these changes.

The Gracious Speech contains a series of measures designed to build on the achievements that we have already made and to encourage further the growth of the prosperity of British industry. The contrast with the proposals emanating from the Labour party could not be greater. A few weeks ago, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) had the cheek to claim that the Labour party and industry somehow had a mutual interest and that Labour was prepared to listen to industry's needs. If nothing else, he deserves full marks for sheer brass neck.

The truth is that the Labour party's policies, in contrast to those in the Gracious Speech, would be catastrophic for industry in this country. Reckless spending policies, financed by economic irresponsibility, would soon push — *[Interruption.]* No, our policies are not reckless, because they are limited in amount. Hon. Members know that perfectly well. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has asked for a blank cheque. Reckless spending policies, financed by economic irresponsibility, would soon push inflation back to the crippling levels from which we have escaped. Penal taxation imposed on anyone earning over £20,000 a year would destroy incentives and drive our most talented managers and workers abroad. Repeal of the trade union legislation, for which the Opposition call, would return us to the bad old days when militant and unrepresentative union leaders called strikes at the drop of a hat, with little or no regard to their effect.

Those industries which we had freed from state control would be taken back into public ownership, forcing them to obey the dictates of politicians rather than their customers and the market, and depriving thousands of employees of their shares. Those industries which were allowed to remain in the private sector would be so encumbered with regulation and control that any sign of enterprise or initiative would be snuffed out.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman would certainly create jobs—jobs for hundreds of bureaucrats—but at the same time he would destroy thousands more by driving foreign investors away and choking our own domestic

[Mr. Brittan]

industry in a mass of red tape and controls. This Government's policies have helped to create an outlook for business which is described in the CBI's report of today as brighter than for many years. The proposals in the Gracious Speech will improve that prospect still further. I urge the House to reject the amendment.

6.42 pm

Mr. Roy Jenkins (Glasgow, Hillhead): I sometimes thought that, when the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not seem wholly at home in the Home Office, it was perhaps because the Department did not suit him. However, his fluent lack of conviction is, I think, an art form which he can transfer from Department to Department.

Mr. Brittan: Really!

Mr. Jenkins: The right hon. and learned Gentleman must receive compliments more graciously. I congratulate him, however, on having overcome the vicissitudes of the summer and I wish him well in his new Department.

The Government are becoming an increasingly rum Government. To try and give them close support must be an increasingly disorientating experience for those of their supporters who endeavour to do so. For years they have been taught to worship at the shrine of monetary aggregates. Sometimes the icon changed. Sometimes it was sterling M3, sometimes MO, sometimes whatever it might be. Nevertheless, this was the shrine at which they worshipped. Two months ago, the Chancellor told us that it was all mumbo jumbo and that we must have entirely new forms of measurement.

The Prime Minister, having proclaimed herself for years the prophet of rolling back public expenditure, having re-nailed her colours to the mast at Blackpool by saying, "We will not reflate," then proceeds to regale the Lord Mayor of London with boasts of the Government's colossal programme of public expenditure. I am not surprised that more consistent economic thinkers such as Lord Stockton—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—he has, in fact, been remarkably consistent over about 48 years—find it difficult to keep up with this whirligig. Presumably, it exemplifies the Prime Minister's expressed belief that what people dislike is not the policies but the presentation of them.

We are now told, therefore, that everything is set fair for the economy, that steady growth is assured and that private as well as public capital projects are bounding ahead. What is the reality? The picture is not entirely bleak. It would be silly to pretend that it was. The inflation prospect is good, even though the Chancellor slipped in rather quietly this afternoon the news that it will be 0·5 per cent. for this year above his budget target. On the whole, however, the prospect is good, at least until sterling, still so foolishly left isolated outside the European monetary system, takes the full force of the double decline of oil. By double decline, I mean the decline of world prices and the beginning of the run-out of our supplies.

There has been some modest growth for an unusual number of years in a row, but it has been modest and it has not brought back manufacturing output to anywhere near the 1979 level. All forecasts, with the exception of one private forecast, expect the rate of growth to tail off in 1986 and again in 1987. That is by no means a wholly bad picture, but there is another side to the equation.

First, there is really no sign at all of any significant reduction in unemployment without a major change in policy. I do not think that anybody, except perhaps the Chancellor and perhaps the Secretary of State, for all I know, really any longer seriously thinks the opposite. Unemployment has probably levelled out but at a totally unacceptable figure. Secondly, contrary to what the Secretary of State said, the post-oil surplus prospect—not merely the post-oil prospect, because the oil will take a long time to go, but the surplus, the big balance of payments surplus, which is beginning to decline quite quickly—still looks devastating.

In endeavouring to engage with this argument, the Secretary of State seemed to me to be confusing the balance of payments argument with other arguments. He said that oil is not the only thing in the country that is going well, and that other industries are making big profits. Perhaps they are, but the fact remains that our balance of payments is now overwhelmingly dependent on this highly temporary and massive oil surplus. Our manufacturing industry is shrunken and what remains is uncompetitive. The Secretary of State knows this perfectly well.

We have a manufacturing trade deficit of approximately £11 billion, all of which has built up in the past three to four years. This is containable by oil and by nothing else. Invisibles can take care of about £4 billion or £5 billion but they cannot do the whole job. As soon as oil goes into a neutral position we are in deep trouble. Should it go into a negative position, the situation would be catastrophic.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): What did the right hon. Gentleman achieve?

Mr. Jenkins: Were there deficits every year when I had responsibility? I recollect that I produced quite large balance of payments surpluses and enabled us, in different circumstances, to repay some Government debt. The hon. and learned Gentleman must make better interventions or he will give lawyers a bad name.

One would have thought that, in these circumstances, the Government might have taken seriously the report of the House of Lords Select Committee. By any standards it was a serious document, compiled by serious people of substance and great experience. Yet so hysterically do the Government resent criticism of any sort that the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry went into a paroxysm of denunciation of the report before it was even published.

Those two—the Chancellor and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry — in trying to rebuke for irresponsibility the members of that Select Committee, not to mention Lord Stockton and a number of right hon. and hon. Members, were like two cabin boys trying to quell a revolt of admirals.

On that burning deck the person for whom I felt sorry was Lt.-Commander Walker, the Secretary of State for Energy. He had been flirting a good deal with the admirals —though wishing to keep his lines open with the cabin boys as well—and it was extremely bad luck on him that when he introduced the most senior admiral to deliver a great benediction, under his chairmanship, he found that it was his own departmental policy—presumably about the only policy on which he agreed with the Government —that was under attack.

Even so, he would have been better advised not to deliver his statement of retraction the following morning. Apparently he had not said that it was selling the silver; it was transferring it from the bureaucrats to the people. However, that totally begged the question of what to do with the money, and on that issue the Government's behaviour has been odd indeed.

For years, the country has been crucified on the cross of the PSBR. The fiscal stance has been too tight for our recent circumstances and we should have loosened it significantly, particularly for capital projects. But the Government have firmly resisted that, although now they are in favour of creative accounting—that is the phrase —and they are prepared to use about £5 billion from capital sales to finance current spending — namely, personal tax cuts.

To sell off a chunk of capital assets and to use the proceeds for capital investment in the rest of the public sector might just be acceptable. However, that is not what is proposed, and what is proposed cannot be justified on any reputable theory of public finance; and when it is accompanied by a Minister using the oil—which might itself be regarded as a capital asset; certainly it is not renewable — almost entirely for current purposes, it amounts to improvident finance on a scale that makes the Prime Minister's old friend General Galtieri almost Gladstonian.

However the money is used, I am deeply sceptical about the management and consumer benefits that flow from turning public monopolies into private ones. I hold no brief for nationalisation—*[Interruption.]*—and on a simple view——

Mr. Baldry: Will the right hon. Gentleman kindly explain which policiés of the Labour party—remembering that he was a member of that Cabinet of that party —he now supports? It seems that he was in favour of an incomes policy but not of nationalisation. In which Labour measures has he lost faith? Which policies has he renounced and to which is he keeping?

Mr. Jenkins: It is probably well known that I have never been in favour of any measure of nationalisation since at least the mid-1960s—*[Interruption.]* I suppose that I may have voted for some of them, but I did so with about as much enthusiasm as the present Prime Minister voted for policies of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath).

Mr. Brittan: Does the right hon. Gentlemen think it is credible, creditable or honourable for him to have been a member of a Government in 1974 who embarked on nationalisation measures, which he supported as one of its centre points, and now to say that he never believed in them?

Mr. Jenkins: I said that from the early 1960s I was, on the whole, disillusioned with nationalisation. It was perfectly well known to everybody at the time that there was resistance to such measures in the Government, and it is absolute nonsense for any theory of Cabinet Government—*[Interruption.]* I do not think the right hon. and learned Gentleman heard the point I was making. With what degree of conviction and enthusiasm does he think the present Prime Minister voted for the policies of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, all of which she now denounces, as she does those of Lord Stockton, as being all part of the bad past?

Mr. Brittan: Will the right hon. Gentleman now answer my question?

Mr. Jenkins: The right hon. and learned Gentleman wants to turn everybody who does not agree with him into a wild dogmatist the other way. He must learn that there is some sense in having a non-dogmatic approach to some issues.

Although I have no faith in the denationalisation of public monopolies and turning them into private monopolies, I reject the simple view that, by doing that, there is automatically produced the splendid management performance that we want.

The Times report from Paris last Friday on the unfortunate Ptarmigan-Rita affair was interesting, because the outcome seemed neatly to illustrate — "confound" may be a better word — both the Prime Minister's dogmatism and her diplomacy. The report said that the French firm had simply appeared to have done its homework much better than the British and to have adapted more skilfully to American requirements. So much for the assumed automatic superiority of a privately owned firm over a nationalised one. It added that

"the crowning 'gaffe' of Mrs. Margaret Thatcher's personal intervention"

was all that was required to complete the series of British mistakes.

The Paymaster General (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Has the right hon. Gentleman yet made up his mind on the way in which he will vote on the privatisation of British Gas? Having given a brief description of certain matters about which he is sceptical, will he tell us whether he will believe in his vote this time, or is he in the midst of another 10 years of votes about which he is wholly sceptical?

Mr. Jenkins: I shall wait until the Bill is produced by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. That seems a sensible way to proceed.

Mr. Lawrence *rose*——

Mr. Jenkins: The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) is again looking for dogma. He is only at home when he can reach out for dogma to tell him that something is right or wrong, sensible or foolish. He has done that for years.

The Government's answer to the stark prospects of no reduction in unemployment and inadequate manufacturing performance to pay our way when the oil runs out is to get faster and further into the service industries. One evening last week, I listened to a Minister citing, as though it were on a tablet of gold, the fact that 86 per cent. of the employed population of New York is now in the service industries. That is hardly relevent. New York is renowned for its exuberance, even in the richest country in the world. It is absurd to say that New York carries the universal message that to turn Liverpool, Glasgow and Birmingham into little Manhattans would solve their problems.

The relative growth of service industries is inevitable and desirable in advanced economies. A return to full employment, which should be possible, will come about through highly efficient and labour-conscious industry. Around that core we can afford to run labour-intensive service industries, both public and private. That is miles away from saying that in Britain we have not moved far or fast enough away from manufacturing and towards services.

[Mr. Jenkins]

It is nonsense to decry the tourist industry, or any other industry, as second-rate. All industry is valuable. We must look at the overall picture to see whether the balance is right and whether we have moved fast enough. Britain has moved further towards services than have Japan or West Germany. We have moved faster and further than nearly any country except for the United States. It is fundamentally wrong that we have run down manufacturing uniquely and dangerously quickly, not that we have gone too far into services. Until the Government realise that central fact and become willing to listen to the House of Lords Select Committee, the Confederation of British Industry, Lord Stockton, the Opposition, the alliance, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup and the large chorus from other Conservative Members rather than their self-congratulatory voices, their approach will be fundamentally flawed.

7.3 pm

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): The House has heard three good and contentious speeches, but I hope that I shall make one with which every hon. Member can safely agree. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) made an angry complaint about the Government's policy. However, his indignation prevented him from noticing that the policy he attacked is no longer quite there. There is a considerable element of reflation in the Government's policy. The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) said that private forecasters agreed that growth would slow down in the next two years. That is true, but the policy has altered, so their projections are all out of date.

I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on having the courage to change his fiscal policy. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East attacked the Government's privatisation policy. I shall not enter the argument about silver, or even the one about the admirals—the right hon. Member for Hillhead was in naval mood this afternoon, first with rum and then with cabin boys—though I should say that in general I support privatisation. But I emphasise that the sale of existing assets does not provide resources to pay for newly produced goods and services. That is because the sale of assets does not change the net wealth of the private sector. Receipts from such sales do not withdraw purchasing power from the private sector as does, for example, the imposition of more taxation. The receipts change the structure of private wealth portfolios, but they make no significant difference to aggregate demand.

That means that increases in public expenditure and cuts in taxation, which we are promised, are straightforward reflationary measures. Contrary to what the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said this afternoon, asset sales do not finance tax cuts. They are independent of them. The tax cuts which will apparently be made will contain a considerable element of reflation, and as such I warmly welcome them. However, I doubt whether they will be enough. Some of the reflation will go in the wrong direction. I agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon) said in this debate the other evening: that most reflation should be done differently and should not be in the form of tax cuts.

I do not understand why the Government say that they are not reflating when they plainly are. Presumably, they are saying one thing and doing another to gain confidence and to reassure the City. But the City is not as silly as that. Indeed, it is not silly at all. I doubt whether it will be fooled by the arbitrary and fairly absurd convention which my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) and the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee have often criticised, whereby asset sales are treated as negative expenditure which reduces the PSBR. I am sure that the City will realise that the Government are reflating. Asset sales reduce the PSBR, but they do not make its funding easier. Indeed, it is possible, in view of what has happened, that interest rates will increase rather than decrease.

We should also realise that there has been some reflation, even while my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was at the Exchequer. The eighth report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee shows that, between 1981 and 1984, there was a significant fiscal expansion equivalent to at least 1 per cent. of gross national product. Although monetary policy has been tight in the sense that real interest rates have been high, it has been generous in that it has allowed a large increase in borrowing by the personal sector. Nevertheless, the reflation that we have enjoyed has certainly been insufficient to reduce unemployment or even, until recently, to stop it increasing.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor said recently that British industry is healthier today than it was six years ago. Others have gone further and have painted a picture of boom-time Britain. That is rather surprising, because even with limited fiscal reflation there has been no recovery from the recession. I do not like to quote my speeches, but as I said during my speech on the Budget in 1984:

> "The relevant definition of recovery . . . is whether the expansion is large enough to bring down unemployment. On that criterion, the recovery has not yet started."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1985; Vol. 56, c. 536.]

What I said then remains true. Since unemployment has still not turned down, we have not yet had a recovery.

The more that I examine the figures, the less I find grounds for satisfaction, let alone euphoria. However, in view of the admonition to speak briefly, I shall not weary the House with many statistics. Instead I shall quote from Sir Winston Churchill, who talked about the paradox of "unemployment amidst dearth." That paradox is with us again. Sir Winston Churchill said 60 years ago:

> "The community lacks goods and a million and a quarter people lack work. It is certainly one of the highest functions of national finance and credit to bridge the gulf between the two. While that unemployment exists . . . no-one is entitled to plume himself on the financial credit policy which we have pursued."

That is very true today when unemployment is more than double what it was then. Collectively it would seem that we have not learned any more about how to run a modern industrial economy during the past 60 years.

As a result of the reflation now in prospect, given a bit of luck, we should have a decent run for a short while, although I doubt whether it will be fast enough. If we could achieve a growth rate of 3·5 or 4 per cent. next year, unemployment would surely begin to fall steadily if not quickly. The current balance of payments might as a result move into deficit, but in a minor way we could follow the example of the Americans and attract enough foreign

capital to prevent a sterling crisis. That would be a risky venture but it might work and it would certainly be politically attractive.

Yet on its own, such a policy would make no contribution to solving the fearsome strategic predicament we still face. This is apparent if one looks some years beyond 1986. Hon. Members should be grateful to the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade to which the right hon. Member for Hillhead referred. I was disappointed that the Secretary of State did not refer to that Committee this afternoon, but he had other things to talk about and one should not write other people's speeches for them. I hope that the Government will make a more considered response than either the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry or the Chancellor did before the report was published, or the Chancellor did at one of those City dinners.

The essential message of that report is starkly simple. Britain's trading performance has been strongly adverse —the report does not state this, but it is true—since the early 1950s. The conflict between full employment and inflation would have occurred to a far greater extent in the late 1970s had it not been for oil.

The rise in oil revenue should have made it possible to avoid that conflict. The bonanza should have been used to put British industry on a proper footing and to provide for its secure future. Unfortunately that has not happened and the underlying economic decline has continued. The production of oil is now at its peak and there will be problems, as the Lords Select Committee said. It is unfortunate that that report has come about five years after the moment when the appropriate strategy decisions could easily have been made.

The report states that, unless the deeply entrenched trends in trade change quite dramatically, the recession will get worse during the next decade, with unemployment rising to much higher levels. The Lords Committee does not believe that the necessary change in competitiveness will occur spontaneously, and I agree. The adverse trends became entrenched before the oil flowed and there is no reason to suppose that they will not survive the oil drying up. Indeed, they are likely to get worse.

The Chancellor is engaging in reflation. I greatly welcome that, despite its risks. There is no evidence, however, that the Chancellor has a strategic plan, and that is a cause of grave anxiety. The Chancellor is living from hand to mouth. He is now putting his hand to his mouth rather more often than he did before, which is welcome, but neither the Chancellor nor the nation can continue to do that for very long. The Lords report is right that market forces will not do the job on their own—the past six years have proved that if they have proved anything. There needs to be a national and international strategy to ensure that market forces work benevolently to help the country out of the economic decline and the crisis that it faces. The Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry are both able men and capable of devising such a strategy, but at present they are declining to do so. It is getting pretty late and I think that they ought to start now.

7.15 pm

Mr. Michael Cocks (Bristol, South): In 1964 I contested the Gloucestershire, South constituency. To my numerous public meetings I took three diagrams. One illustrated the comparative decline of British coal and steel production since the war, a second showed the comparative decline of our gross national product and the third showed the comparative decline in the British share of the world export market. The decline that I tried to illustrate then has gone on since, remorselessly, and the effect on employment has been devastating.

Recent Confederation of British Industry figures show that our share of the world market for manufactures has dropped from some 16 per cent. in the early 1960s, when I was showing my diagrams, to less than 8 per cent. now. It is estimated that one percentage point drop represents some 250,000 jobs. The increase in import penetration is equally devastating. In 1970 it was some 16 per cent., and I understand that it has increased to some 28 per cent. Each percentage point of that increase represents a loss of 75,000 jobs.

We are all preoccupied with the problems of unemployment and industrial decline. Deep philosophical differences separate the two sides of the House on how those problems should be tackled, but we ought to be able to agree that if we bought more British goods there would be an immediate benefit. We have a large market. If we talk about import controls, we get into a morass of arguments about the general agreement on tariffs and trade and other obscure matters. Most of the political discussion that I have heard revolves ultimately around the amount of resources available and how they should be disbursed.

I recently drove behind a man with a sticker in his back window saying:

"Say No to Ratecapping".

There is nothing wrong with that, but he was driving a French car. Had he bought a Metro or a Maestro with some 95 per cent. British content, he would have given someone in Britain two months' work, saved the Exchequer about £1,000 in benefit payments and enabled it to receive income from tax and insurance contributions. The balance of payments would also have been eased and resources would have been generated to put into the kitty for the Government to dispose of.

The Trades Union Congress estimates that it costs some £11,000 to have somebody out of work. That represents an appalling waste of resources. How are we to encourage people to buy British manufactures? General exhortations are no good — I know that from my previous incarnation. We have to deal with specific cases. Can we not agree on some scale of approximate work equivalent for various purchases, even if it is only for a couple of hours, so that when people spend their money they have some idea what contribution they are making to the unemployment problem by buying British goods?

Suggestions such as this have previously led to a lot of nit-picking. I should not be at all surprised if I am reminded that the Maestro has an imported gearbox. Such virtually irrelevant arguments get me down. We usually get acrimonious attacks on trade unions as well. We had a good visual aid of that from the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) who introduced a note about activities of unions in the motor industry. I was reminded of young Conservatives in the 1950s who used to jump up and down at the back of meetings squeaking, "Groundnuts."

I am sick of hearing ill-judged, uninformed and prejudiced remarks about working people. If one wants to look for blame, much of it goes to middle management. I am told that there are now production and management systems available that could go a long way towards revolutionising British industry and helping to meet Japanese and other foreign competition.

[Mr. Michael Cocks]

I shall omit a section of my speech about the secondary education syllabus, in deference to you, Mr. Speaker, but the House will suffer it another time.

If we buy British on every possible occasion, individuals can contribute directly to the well-being of the nation and the solution of our appalling problems.

There is a specific problem that I believe needs urgent Government attention and action. In and around the Bristol area, some 2,000 are employed by Allied-Lyons, which is the subject of an unusual takeover bid by Elders under the direction of the Australian entrepreneur, John Elliott. The world-famous wine firm of Harveys, the largest sherry company in the world, is in my constituency. It employs 450 in Bristol and generates substantial exports and income to the Exchequer through various taxes.

As the Member for that constituency, I received a letter from John Elliott, the Australian who is masterminding the takeover. The letter is dated 9 October and reads:

"We respect and appreciate the standard and traditions of companies such as John Harvey, and have every intention of their identity and reputation, which has been built up over several generations prior to their acquisition by Allied-Lyons, being preserved."

Imagine my surprise when in the *Financial Times* of 2 November there was a report of an interview given by Geoffrey Kent, the chairman of the Imperial Group. At the end of the shareholders' meeting he said that several weeks ago the group had had talks with Elders about joining the consortium to take part in the takeover or, alternatively, buying various bits of it when it was butchered. The group was particularly interested in the wine and spirits, off-licences and restaurants.

The bid is summed up in words of a letter that I have received from the branch secretary of a large section of Allied-Lyons at Clevedon, near Bristol, which employs about 500. The secretary of the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union says:

"As you may imagine, the prospect of being sold off to whom we know not, is the cause of some grave concern to all employees of Hale-Trent Cakes. We are writing to seek your support and assistance in resisting this bid which would appear to be nothing more than asset stripping."

The Elders literature concentrates on the Allied-Lyons shareholders. It says nothing about the 60,000 employees, who are presumably expendable if necessary. Even the offer of equity shares to public house managers turns out on inspection to be a pig in a poke, because the brewery will do the valuation.

I believe that the bid is against the national interest for a number of reasons. Apart from employing 60,000, Allied is a heavy investor in the United Kingdom and last year its capital expenditure was about £150 million. The pieces which were sold off will probably be bought by existing competitors and if the process is repeated it could soon approach a monopoly. Allied is in international competition with north American and continental groups and carving it up will damage its ability to compete. The heavily geared Elders operation would leave the business carrying a heavy debt. That is a burden that will inhibit further investment and lead to a minimum tax return from the ex-Allied companies for some time.

There are long-standing rules of company law that prevent a company from providing finance to acquire its own shares and it is not possible to tell whether the proposed action breaches those rules. Much of the matter is shrouded in mystery and Mr. Elliott should come clean about it.

We are told that this activity is a prelude to a political career in Australia for Mr. Elliott. It is grotesque that British workers and British industry should be jeopardised and asked to act as a finishing school for his aspirations.

The Government claim that they believe in competition. I ask Ministers to consider that Australian legislation protects Australian businesses' insular position and that the Australian Foreign Investment Review Board precludes counter-attack. That means that Mr. Elliott can come out from his Australian stockade, like some latter-day Kerry Packer, immune to retaliation and pick off companies around the world, if he can manage it, knowing that, in effect, he is safe in his own castle.

The bid, which is backed by foreign banks, is the first in Britain on such a scale. It can be financed only by asset stripping and the consequent destruction of many types of jobs and industries. Regrettably, this sort of bid, which involves loading business with excessive debts, is already prevalent in the United States. The Government should refer the bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and consider urgently how to deal with the problem. They must surely realise the dire consequences that swathes of British industries will suffer if this sort of depredation becomes commonplace and takes off. I ask the Government to be as robust in protecting United Kingdom jobs and industries as some of our partners in the EEC are in protecting jobs and industries within their borders.

7.26 pm

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): It is an honour to be called after the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks), who renders such service to the House. It was always a pleasure to know that he was dealing with the Opposition's affairs. Now he leaves the Labour party "coxless" and up the creek without a paddle, as has so often been the case.

I shall contribute to the debate by taking up early-day motion 29 and making a short speech. It was a delight to hear my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announce that soft loans would be made available, something that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry commended to the House months ago. I hope that the loans will be implemented swiftly and will be examined continually to ensure that they are relevant to the scale of demand in China and Indonesia, for example, and in other parts of the world where our competitors—not only customers—make the terms and conditions for the sale of goods, especially manufactured goods.

I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been exercised somewhat by the report from another place on overseas trade. It follows a report which did not exercise his predecessor so much, unfortunately. That was produced by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry and was directed to the problems surrounding the import and export of manufactured goods from and to other nations in the Common Market.

The report on overseas trade from another place extrapolates that which many of us said in this place over a year ago. I do not disagree with the report, but we must pay attention to the way in which Britain's competitive manufacturing base is being eroded. If we are having success in service industries, that is very good, but we must ensure that that success is complemented by equal

competitiveness in manufactured goods. There have been so many occasions when we have believed that we can substitute when there has been no substitute for jobs that have been lost by those who have given their lives to them. These employees have often served long apprenticeships and have experienced long periods of training for particular jobs of work within areas of our economy where we should be competitive and where, for reasons which are debatable, we are not as competitive as we should be.

The problem is not a recent one and it cannot be assigned to a certain Government or a certain party. The problem has been with us throughout the century. At the beginning of the century we were at the top of the league of success in world exports of manufactured goods. We were followed by the United States, France and Italy, and Japan was not even mentionable. We are now faced with problems that are entirely our own despite a high level of competence and a base of manufacturing capability that should be able to respond competitively to world market opportunities.

I say to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, who addressed himself surprisingly quickly to the report on overseas trade from another place, that we are not faced with a party political problem and that we must not talk down our manufacturing industry. I declare an interest as an industrialist and an engineer. I am conscious of the ability of the British people to succeed and we must chalk up our achievements. At the same time, it is wrong to give the impression that we do not have problems. I am aware that productivity has increased and that tremendous advances are being made in electronics and biotechnology, but there are many areas, such as the steel industry, where encouragement from the Government at a critical time, such as the present, could turn markets in our favour, especially in the EEC, as decontrol comes into being at the beginning of the next calendar year.

As times change and industries evolve, we should examine the results that we get from contributing to various industries. In Hastings and Rye we have many employment difficulties although we have a very good farming industry and an excellent fishing industry. In general terms, the Government subsidise agriculture in this country to the tune of £3 billion when the gross domestic product achieved by that industry is about £7 billion. Manufacturing industry, which produces 10 times that output for the benefit of this country, receives only about £1 billion in support from the Department of Trade and Industry. The ratios are not sensible. That is in no way to denigrate the tremendous efforts and productivity of British farmers, but we should surely put our money on the horses that provide maximum employment and revenue for this country.

Two industries cause me especial concern. The first is often debated in the House and is a difficult subject. I do not pretend to be an authority on the textile industry, but in the past five years that industry has gone from a deficit of about £50 million to a deficit of about £1 billion and has lost 150,000 jobs. Those two sides of the equation must be taken together. I am not saying that we could have protected the people involved because in the end the customers have the right to make the decisions, but we cannot afford to neglect a situation in which dominance in a particular home market can be eroded by Government failure to consider ways of stimulating and thus protecting the industry.

At the other end of the spectrum, in information technology, we now have a deficit of £1 billion per year. That is not common sense in the country that invented the computer. Having spent about 25 years in the computer industry, I am conscious of the high standards of science and technology that can be provided. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) will recall times when he was involved in promoting that industry. The deficit of £1 billion reflects about 25,000 jobs that ought to be in this country. Strangely enough, that is also the total number of vacancies in the industry. We are not equating what Government can do with what is needed in this country in terms of the supply of people who can bring to these industries and therefore to their country output that will counteract the enormous inflow now taking place but which we do not really need at all.

The percentage net imports of electronic products is a problem in the United Kingdom but not in the rest of the Common Market. In the past four years the percentage has risen from about 17 per cent. of our needs to about 30 per cent. of our needs while the level in the rest of the Common Market has remained roughly the same. We are tending to import equipment that we should be able to produce from our own resources as a result of investment in our education system.

The Confederation of British Industry has produced a report which I understand is to be debated at its forthcoming conference in Harrogate. That report refers to all kinds of good and bad things in the British economy. It refers to the strong base of large companies, the strong international customer base, the fact that English is recognised as the major business language and the energy benefits already debated today. It also refers, however, to our poor investment record and the failure of our education and training systems to meet the needs of modern business. In my constituency I was horrified to find that in one of the principal comprehensive schools teachers acknowledge that business studies are taught in terms of jobs that are no longer available because the school does not have the equipment to relate its teaching to the jobs that are now available. I also came across an A-level language teacher who did not even have a blackboard.

Responsibility for investment concerns the whole of Government. It is not just the responsibility of industry. Industry is suffering severely from problems caused by high interest rates. This is clearly shown in a recent report by the Federation of British Electrotechnical and Allied Manufacturers Associations dealing with research and development in small and medium-sized firms. I recently asked my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister whether she was aware of the growing concern in the scientific community about the erosion of our science base. This is not just important at university level but concerns the way in which the industries themselves are responding, as the report shows.

The federation received responses from 116 companies, 67 of which indulged in no research whatever although they were involved in the electronics and electromechanical industries at the sharp end of technology. Those which invested in research did so out of revenue because they could not afford to use borrowed money. Only when gross profits were between 25 per cent. and 40 per cent. on the product sold were the companies prepared to borrow money. That creates an uncompetitive situation. The Government must realise that high interest rates are stopping people investing and thus creating the seed corn

[Mr. Kenneth Warren]

fields of the future. I have said this many times before but I say it once again. I often wonder whether speeches in the House of Commons are ever actually heard.

7.37 pm

Mr. John Silkin (Lewisham, Deptford): The hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) rightly stressed the need for investment in industry and I hope to follow him on that in a moment.

The Gracious Speech states:

"my Government will do all in their power to encourage the growth of new jobs."

That is the sole evidence that the Government are aware that there is an unemployment problem. Even then, the Gracious Speech talks about the growth of new jobs but makes no mention of measures to prevent the destruction of existing jobs.

Like all hon. Members, I look with anguish at the unemployment figures in my constitueny. Total registered unemployment in Deptford — this understates the real position—is 8,000 or nearly 21 per cent. That is more than 7·5 per cent. higher than it was at this time last year —so much for the new jobs that the Government talk about. Registered unemployment has been appallingly high since the last election in that area — four miles from the Palace of Westminster and from the very centre of our country. I accept that my constituency has special problems and that its unemployment figures exceed those in the rest of the country, but in the United Kingdom as a whole unemployment now stands at more than 13 per cent.

In May 1979, when the Prime Minister was busy castigating Labour for not working, the average rate of unemployment was under 5 per cent. In the intervening years there has been a galloping decline in manufacturing, as though there were an inescapable link between the growth of unmployment and the decline of manufacturing industry. The Chancellor says that we should not worry, that there is real evidence of recovery and that everything in the garden is lovely — allowing, of course, for seasonal adjustment. The chairman of the Conservative party would add, "And subject also to the usual bicycle ride on the part of the unemployed."

If people are to get on their bikes, it is a fair test to discover whether the bike industry is leading the recovery of which the Chancellor speaks. Britain's largest bike business is Raleigh. Five years ago it was making a 4 per cent. profit on sales. That figure is still with us, but today it is a 4 per cent. loss, and the Tube Investments Group, of which Raleigh is a part, has cut its total jobs in Britain from 50,000 five years ago to 23,000 today. Today, the Conservative party chairman's father might have to go abroad to get his bicycle, let alone to find work.

The Chancellor's claim that investment is recovering rings hollow when one looks at the figures. During the recess the Central Statistical Office published its annual blue book showing what has been happening to the real level of manufacturing investment. Even allowing for depreciation of plant and equipment and for industry's growing preference for leasing rather than buying equipment outright, the evidence still is that net manufacturing investment has in real terms been negative for four consecutive years.

British manufacturing industry is still spending so little on new plant and equipment that it is failing even to replace the proportion that is wearing out, let alone to re-equip and modernise so that it can keep up with our competitors. Four consecutive years of negative net investment is even worse than in the depths of the 1930s recession, when real net investment was negative for three consecutive years. That is critical evidence of Britain's continuing weakness.

Investment is the key to modernisation, the introduction of new technology and new products. Our weakness in all the non-price areas of design, quality, service and delivery dates is losing British firms their market share at home and abroad—and all these flow from lack of investment.

The CBI has just produced some alarming figures on British competitiveness, but being priced out of markets because of rising costs pales into insignificance compared with these non-price considerations. That is the reality behind Britain's appalling trade deficit in manufactured products. Without the revenues from North sea oil, the situation would be desperate. Whatever the Secretary of State may say, and however much the Chancellor may sing an optimistic song, the oil revenues are now passing their peak and are beginning to decline. Henceforth, it will be harder and harder for the Chancellor to disguise the truth about Britain's predicament.

The kindest thing that can be said about this Government is that they are not trying deliberately to destroy our industry and our people's livelihoods. That is coming about not through some well rehearsed plan but out of sheer incompetence. The ship of state is not being steered by the compass or even by dead reckoning—the Government appear to be relying on Halley's comet. Yet if we are to have a chance of survival, it is planning—and imaginative planning at that—that we require.

Three things should be set in motion immediately. First, we must reverse the squeeze on public spending and industrial investment. Secondly, we must increase total spending in the economy to give firms a reason to expand production and to create jobs. Thirdly, we must protect and maintain the core industries on which the survival of our country depends. A nation that has allowed its steel, coal, shipbuilding, shipping and heavy engineering industries to decline is as defenceless in peace as it would be in time of war.

The place to start is with a programme of house building, road building and renewal of our sewerage systems, to put the construction and civil engineering industries back to work. We need Government action to encourage manufacturing industry to invest. Boosting total spending in the economy is critical, but direct pressure on big business through planning agreements could help to steer industrial investment and the jobs it creates to the areas where those jobs are most needed. Clearly, there would be no point in stimulating spending if that merely allowed imports to be sucked in and to create jobs abroad rather than at home. Therefore, we must be prepared to control the growth in manufactured imports to the level that we can afford.

We can put together a coherent package that would change Britain's course from cutback and decline to modernisation and expansion if we have the imagination and courage. Nothing less will meet the crisis that we face. Unfortunately for our country, the Gracious Speech well demonstrates that the present Government have neither the capacity nor the will to achieve it.

7.46 pm

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): Explicitly or implicitly, I shall refer to some of the points made by the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin), but I hope that he will forgive me if I do not refer to them now, simply because time is short.

In the last few days we have heard the most remarkable outpouring of optimism from the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Indeed, it was welcome to hear the Prime Minister last night enumerate what was being done in terms of public expenditure, just as it was welcome to hear the Chancellor and my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General today describe how they were setting about some measure of mild reflation.

Nevertheless, I hope that that optimism remains laced with realism. If it does not, it could lead to complacency, and only too often in the past we have seen what happens to Governments who become complacent.

Much has been done by this Government, but there is still infinitely more to do. No one should detract from their achievements and successes, but in politics as achievements are chalked up, other problems appear and develop on the blind side. Unless they are aware, alert and prepared to evolve policy to take account of those problems, the Government will be remembered for their inability to cope with them rather than for their earlier successes.

Problems there are in plenty. We have been debating them since last Wednesday, and today we are debating the problems that are in the very capable hands of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, ably abetted by the Paymaster General. They are also aided by tidal waves of advice from many directions. I do not intend to hold back, but shall try to reinforce some of that advice.

The two factors most relevant to this debate are that since 1978-79 unemployment has risen by 8 percentage points—from 5 per cent. to 13 per cent.—and that since 1983 the balance of trade in manufactured goods has moved into deficit. To some extent those two factors are connected. In the last six years manufacturing industry has lost a quarter of its work force.

When considering manufacturing, we now have the benefit of the recent comprehensive and detailed report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade. That report was provided with an immediate imprimatur by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who said of it:

> "The Government . . . wholly rejects the mixture of special pleading dressed up as analysis and assertion masquerading as evidence which leads the Committee to its doom-laden conclusion. We equally reject its principal remedy — that British manufacturing industry should be protected by a cocoon of subsidies."

With that recommendation from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, a mass of people, who might otherwise have disregarded it, rushed off to read, learn and digest what was contained in the report. But those who have read it have discovered that it contains no special pleading and that if there is a principal remedy it has little to do with a cocoon of subsidies.

I cannot understand why the Government are so much on the defensive about the report. It seems to be a constructive and helpful contribution. Furthermore, it is not commenting upon just the last six years. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) pointed out, it comments upon what has been happening during the last 30 years. The report could be misconceived, but when the Association of British Chambers of Commerce considers that

> "both the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry were rash and unwise to 'rubbish' the Lord's findings",

and also points out that

> "Britain is unique amongst the major industrial nations in not having by 1984 regained her pre-recession level of manufacturing production",

and when the exalted Anglophile *New York Times* writer, Mr. R. W. Apple, Junior, after eight and a half years in London, writes:

> "Six years after Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher took office, proud old Britain . . . remains a nation in decline",

we should sit up and take note. It is always more important for a Government to pay attention to the judgment of others about what is happening and about what they are doing than to their own.

It is true that manufacturing production has decreased as a proportion of gross domestic product in many, if not most, of the developed countries, but in none has it declined in absolute terms, except in the United Kingdom, despite recent improvements. I find it positively frightening that United Kingdom manufacturing production was still lower, by 4·3 per cent., in 1984 than it was in 1975, whereas in Japan it was plus 61·4 per cent., in the United States plus 41·6 per cent., in West Germany plus 16 per cent., in Italy plus 22·1 per cent. and in the Netherlands plus 22·7 per cent.

My fear is not mollified by the growth in oil output. As has already been emphasised several times today, it is ephemeral. Nor am I mollified by soothing Treasury theories, to which reference has already been made by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), about the assumed effect on the value of the pound, and therefore exports, once oil declines in importance, for that is far too hypothetical for comfort. In any case, the theory will be nonsense unless manufacturing capacity is built up now.

Nor do I place overmuch faith in invisible exports saving our skins, for I concur with the chairman of the British Invisible Exports Council who told the House of Lords Select Committee that his organisation did

> "not see this growth of [invisible surpluses] as being to a major extent a substitute for decline in general industrial activity."

Let us do all in our power to develop the benefits and successes of our invisible trade, of banking, insurance, shipping and tourism. What my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry said today was welcome, but we still must have a thriving and expanding industrial sector if we are to maintain our standard of living, our National Health Service, our education system — all facets and foundations of our national existence.

What is to be done? The Government alone cannot supply the answers. The House of Lords Select Committee emphasised that point. The Government alone cannot change national attitudes, but they can give a lead; nor alone can Government be responsible for changes in the education system, for the level of wage settlements, and therefore competitiveness, or for the quality, design and delivery of goods on time. However, the Government have a part to play. As the report says, they can take the initiative in formulating a national industrial policy which

[Mr. Charles Morrison]

makes for faster growth in manufacturing. What is more, the Government can and must look at and learn from the experience of our leading competitors. Why is West Germany's surplus on trade in manufactured goods so enormous? Is it simply because, according to a National Institute study, labour productivity, at least in some comparable firms, is 63 per cent. higher than it is in the United Kingdom? Or is it partly due to the extent and type of support for industry that is given in West Germany? In 1981 it totalled no fewer than 113 billion deutschmarks. That is not an inconsiderable sum for an allegedly free market Government. But there are just as many lessons to be learnt from the French, the Italians, the Japanese and the United States. None of them operates a free market. All of them rig it, to the advantage of their country, their industry and their levels of employment; so we, too, must be a little less purist in our attitude to industry.

The Government should have as their objective that never again should a witness before a parliamentary Committee say, as did Sir Hector Laing to the Select Committee of the House of Lords:

"The present Government has in effect made a virtue of not having a vision of the future of British industry, and a positive policy of distancing the State from the industrial sector."

Instead, the Government should react to what he said thereafter:

"I think the Government should acknowledge that the nation does have an industrial problem in which it has a serious policy interest. A clear indication that the Government is ready to give a strong lead by, for example, launching an industrial priorities exercise, could prove very effective."

Lastly, apart from raising the threshold, it seems to me to be totally inappropriate to make any across-the-board cuts in income tax, at least for the time being. Not only would it draw in imports, but it would mean that less money would be available for research and development —squeezed all too much already—for export promotion, for action that the Confederation of British Industry says is required now to stop further decay in Britain's infrastructure, and also for overseas aid and, thereby, the creation of new markets.

Furthermore, it would be politically misconceived at a time when, albeit wrongly, people believe that public services are being cut just when they are in great need of improvement and when the vast majority of people want them to be extended. In any case, I believe that to cut income tax now would be to send out the wrong signals to the British people.

The state of the nation may be much improved, but nothing should be done to imply that we can relax. If my constituents and my own constituency Conservative association are anything to go by, there is a conviction throughout the country that, for the time being, every spare penny should be aimed directly at reducing unemployment.

7.58 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): It is a great pleasure to follow the wise and constructive remarks of the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison). The Government's attitude towards unemployment has undergone a number of changes. Six years ago they criticised the Labour Government and said that Labour was not working, although unemployment had then been falling for two years. Their 1979 election manifesto promised more genuine, new jobs. The Gracious Speech, on 15 May 1979, stated:

"My Government will give priority in economic policy . . . and create a climate in which commerce and industry can flourish . . . and increased employment in all parts of the United Kingdom."—[*Official Report*, 15 May 1979; Vol. 967, c. 48.]

That was the prospectus when the monetarist experiment began. The opposite has happened.

There began immediately a dramatic, remorseless, unremitting and continual increase in the number of men and women without work, and now that number is higher than Britain has ever known. Then the Government's attitude changed. They said that the increase in unemployment was temporary — even a sign that Government policies were working, that a leaner, fitter Thatcherite economy would take off and produce jobs, but that it would take just a little time for the policies to work.

As the years went by, a number of optimistic statements were made, especially by such people as the present Chancellor — that unemployment had peaked and had reached a plateau and would now fall. It is now clear that all that was moonshine, that they did not know what they were talking about, that they were wrong, that monetarism was an utter failure and that the Government's policies had inflicted a disaster on Britain unparalleled in peacetime. They have completely destroyed large parts of British industry. As a result, between June 1979 and June 1983, 1,700,000 manufacturing jobs were lost. That unnecessary carnage and man-made disaster is the main cause of the present plague of unemployment.

Manufacturing output now is less than it was in 1979. We have gone backwards. This manufacturing disaster is not just the main cause of unemployment; it is the main reason why the Government feel that they can no longer afford the welfare state or finance the public services which our people need and which would create more jobs.

Confronted with the remorseless increase in the numbers out of work in each of the past six years, the Government's attitude changed again. Instead of repeating that the solution was around the corner, the Government, seeing that the solution was not going to come and that their policies had failed, gave up and washed their hands of the problem and, in a volte-face, declared, "Unemployment has nothing to do with us. We are only the Government." Of course, that is not what the Conservative party said at election time, but that is the new doctrine. Bankrupt of ideas, the Government say, "We can do nothing. Do not blame us; blame the unemployed."

In recent weeks, a gloss has been put on this. In the run-up to the next election, the presentation of this matter has been put in the hands of that great philosopher, original thinker and story-teller, Jeffrey Archer. His remedy and solution to the problem is to assure us that it does not exist — that the problem is an illusion. Leading a chorus, including Sir Michael Edwardes, Mr. Archer has callously defined the problem out of existence, mocking, belittling and making fun of the jobless. He has made the brilliant discovery, and assured the rest of the population, that the unemployed are not really unemployed at all—they are work-shy, malingerers, spongers, living happily on state benefits, or fraudulently working in the black economy. That is the new line being sedulously peddled.

Lord Young has joined in. We cannot question him in this House, but we can read his speeches. He referred to the annual labour force survey which found that 940,000

claiming benefit had not sought work in the previous week. We are expected to make the heroic assumption that they are not really unemployed. That is ludicrous.

Mr. Peter Lilley (St. Albans): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Leighton: I ask the hon. Gentleman to forgive me. I shall not give way because we do not have much time.

If people live in depressed areas and are out of work for six months, one year or two years, is it any wonder that they become discouraged? However often they cycle around on their bikes, they learn that the jobs are not there. Those workers are being realistic. Older people, with few or redundant skills, fear that they will never get a job. The survey found that, if they were asked, "Have you looked for work in the previous month?", another 400,000 people would have to be added to the figures.

The most important finding of the survey is the confirmation of the vast number of hidden unemployed —those who are jobless and looking for work but who do not appear in the official figures because they cannot claim benefit. About 850,000—almost another 1 million —should be added to the figures. There are also the men over 60 who no longer have to register to claim benefit; there are those who have retired early because there is no work; and there are another 600,000 on special employment measures. Instead of, as mendacious, weasel-worded Conservative propagandists pretend, the official figures overstating the tragedy, waste and misery of unemployment, they grossly under-estimate the dimension and gravity of the evil that has been inflicted on us.

Mr. Lilley *rose*——

Mr. Leighton: Any truthful and realistic measurement would give us a figure of about 5 million unemployed. It is a disgrace that the Government seek to obscure and distort the truth.

Another myth that the Government are stooping to spread is that the unemployed are not really unemployed because they are all hard at work in the black economy. Lord Young is again to the fore, declaring:

"By far the greatest number of long-term unemployed live in the south-east alongside employers who say they cannot get people."

He says that the number of vacancies in the south-east is the highest in Britain. We are invited to believe that those people are not really working or looking for work but are engaged in the black economy. That is sheer confusion. Surely he must know that the explanation is perfectly straightforward—that there are more people living in the south-east. About a third of the United Kingdom's population and work force live there, yet only one fifth of those who have been out of work for more than one year. In other words, there is a larger percentage of the population and a smaller percentage of the long-term unemployed—the opposite of what Lord Young was trying to suggest.

There is more. Why are there vacancies in the south-east? That is explained in the October issue of *Employment Gazette*, published by Lord Young's Department. More than half the vacancies — a higher proportion than elsewhere—are due to skill shortages. There is just no one with the skills to do those jobs. This approach is an insult to every one of the unemployed. Surely the first thing the Government owe them is the truth.

We come to the much trumpeted 600,000 new jobs that have allegedly been created. What are the facts about the Government's record? Between December 1979 and March 1983 2,125,000 jobs were destroyed. Between March 1983 and June 1985, although the employment figures continued to rise, there was an increase of 260,000 employees. The latest tally is that there are 1,865,000 fewer people employed than when the Conservative party came to office.

How is it possible for there to be a modest increase in the number of employees without this reducing unemployment? Is this not a paradox? The explanation is that virtually all those employees are part-time. If they do just a couple of hours' work, they count as one unit. Many of those people are doing second jobs and therefore are counted twice. The 1984 labour force survey revealed that 450,000 people had second jobs and 250,000 had self-employed second jobs. The survey showed that this practice was growing. It accounts for a large part of the increase.

Another explanation of the seeming paradox is that these part-time jobs are taken by the hidden unemployed, many of them women. The Government have fallen victim to their own trick of excluding those people genuinely seeking work but who cannot claim benefits. They may exclude them but they still exist, demonstrating again that the Government woefully underestimate the extent of Britain's unemployment.

In addition, married women who are taking these part-time jobs are overwhelmingly the wives of employed husbands—not unemployed husbands—so the growth in the number of part-time female jobs has not helped the unemployed. In an attempt to reach the propagandist figure of 600,000, the Government have to refer to the classification "employed labour force" which includes the self-employed on whom the Government have no firm figures. They can only guess, and they make the huge assumption that since 1981 there has been an unprecedented increase of 393,000. There is no hard evidence for that. Instead, the Government make optimistic assumptions and projections which automatically add thousands to their weekly figures of the employed labour force. If these people really exist, does anyone else know about them? For example, will the Inland Revenue and national insurance branch confirm their existence from their records? Today, I tabled a written question to the Chancellor on this matter. I look forward to receiving some corroboration.

The Government insist that many of the unemployed are not really without work but are up to their necks in the black economy. Sir Michael Edwardes has taken the estimate of the size of the black economy, deduced that 2 million people might be involved, assumed that all of them are allegedly unemployed, and simply cut the jobless figure by 2 million. If the Government succeeded in making the whole of the country believe that myth, they would solve much of their problem. The truth is that all the evidence, the studies and empirical research have shown that employed people are more likely to be involved in the black economy than those who are unemployed. It is primarily employed people who are moonlighting. Some of them may sit on the Tory Benches.

The evidence shows that to participate in the black economy people need tools, materials, transport and a network of contacts. In other words, it is not the unemployed who are benefiting from the black economy, but those who are doing well already and who are moonlighting in addition.

[Mr. Leighton]

For the future the headline figure for unemployment each month should now appear to go down because of the Government's special employment measures—an extra 100,000 people on the community programme and two years of YTS. What cannot be denied, whether by Jeffrey Archer, Sir Michael Edwardes or Lord Young, is that the Government have presided over a staggering increase in mass, multi-million, chronic long-term unemployment with all the waste, misery, heartache, despair and social breakdown that that brings.

For that, after six years, the Government stand condemned. We have unused capacity, unused abilities, unused people and unused capital available. We have enormous unsatisfied public and private needs. Is it beyond the wit and intelligence of man to put those together? That is the challenge before us. We eliminated unemployment in the years between 1939 and 1945 to produce weapons of war. Why can we not do the same to produce the necessities of peace? Things will never be well in Britain until we do. Things can never be well while the unemployed are shut out by our society.

To achieve a sense of one nation, one society, one community and a sense of cohesion, of national solidarity and of commonwealth for all our citizens, all must share, all must benefit, all must work and unemployment must be diminished. As this Government have not managed matters better after six years, it is time that they made way for a Government who will.

8.12 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): During last year's debate on the Gracious Speech I tried to draw the attention of the House to the problems of a northern industrial constituency where the pain of unemployment was evident, not so much through the pages of the newspapers as on my doorstep. I feel that it is time to address the problem once again, this time from the point of view of trade and industry which are the cornerstones upon which employment in my constituency depends.

The first point to make clear is that there has been a change of attitude by the Government over the past 12 months. We can refer to the speech made last night by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and to that made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State in Blackpool recently, when he clearly and unmistakably put his finger on the problem of the divide between north and south. For the first time, perhaps, a member of the Government made it clear that he was not afraid to address the regional problems of changes in industry. Perhaps for too long the Government have tried not to address those problems. They thought that, in some way, if they mentioned the problems caused by the changes in industry which produced unemployment, by implication unemployment would be laid at their door. That was not my right hon. and learned Friend's attitude. The Government are not responsible for unemployment, but it is their responsibility to deal with the unemployment caused by the inevitable changes in this country's trade and industry.

For the two years before this change in attitude, colleagues in the north of England sometimes thought that they were crying in the wilderness about the problems of the north of England. I feel that that has changed. We now think that the Front Bench have heard something of what we have said.

My constituents have always been open to argument and persuasion. There is no doubt that my constituency has seen changes in its industry. When my father first came to Bury as a general practitioner just after the war he could tell when it was Bury holiday week because it was the first time in the year that he could see the town. At other times, smoke from all the chimneys would cover the town. Now, the clean air legislation and fewer chimneys have ensured the Bury's beauties can be seen all the time.

The people of Bury have recognised, therefore, as decade has followed decade, the inevitable changes in their industries. It was noticeable that the CBI's recent statement to the Select Committee of another place mentioned that Britain's manufacturing decline was not a sudden event but the product of several decades.

Because the people of my constituency are not fools, they are unlikely to be swayed by many of the Opposition arguments. They remember Labour's unemployment record—never leaving office with unemployment lower than it was when they began. They see the futility of high-spending policies that rely on money that cannot be produced and that must eventually hit them hard in their pockets or in their jobs. They have a long memory. They remember the country's near-bankruptcy, when it went to the IMF, in the years 1974 to 1979. They remember the large public sector cuts and the winter of discontent. Matters may have been difficult and bad in my constituency from time to time, but they are never so bad that my constituents would be tempted by the arguments advanced by the Opposition.

Over the past 12 months, Bury has seen some changes. We became an assisted area once again last November. That has resulted in a payment of £120,000 through regional selective assistance. We are also a textile closure area. I have a list of all the firms in Bury that have benefited over the past year from that scheme. Some £500,000 has been directed to Bury. It has resulted in about £3 million of investment. Those are the types of schemes that create jobs, which the Government have been bad at making much of, but they exist and are genuine. They mean jobs.

Bury, Ramsbottom and Tottington have turned the corner. There is now a need to talk up the area. It is easy to talk somewhere down. Private investment is returning to Bury. The amount of private investment coming in is plain to see when I visit industries in the town. The town centre of my constituency is a busy, bustling shopping centre on a Saturday morning. People are possibly attracted by the free parking policies of the Conservative-controlled council, something that is rare in greater Manchester. It brings in people from miles around. The retail and services sectors have compensated for the manufacturing decline.

The town has learned a hard lesson over the past two years. Management and work force realise that no longer are there two sides in industry. If this Administration's period of office since 1979 has done anything, it has spelled out to industry that management and work force must co-operate and work together. "Us" and "them" should now only mean "us" as British and "them" as foreign competition. For boardroom and workbenches the consequences of not co-operating are dire. That has been realised by all the better firms in my area.

The town's work force has responded sometimes by going for years with no wage increases and at other times low wage increases in manufacturing industries suffering

difficulties. The work force has realised that it must play its part. Industries that survive can achieve much by management and work force coming together and realising that they have common problems.

That change is unlikely to have been achieved without the problems and difficulties that have been suffered since 1979, without industry coming to grips with the decline that has been occurring for several decades, as mentioned by the CBI in its evidence to the Select Committee of another place. The decline was not sudden. It has been coming for a long time. If they are asked carefully, most of our constituents know that. They are not, therefore, fooled by claims that the decline has been brought about by Conservative policies followed since 1979.

It would be unfair if I did not respond to the balance of the debate, which has been about our anxiety for British manufacturing. The retail and services sectors in my town have picked up immeasurably. Even so, by no stretch of the imagination will Bury become the pizza and hamburger capital of the north of England. It must always depend on certain elements of the manufacturing sector, and it is time to ensure that the Front Bench realises that the cries of manufacturing industry are not cries of "Wolf" but cries about views that are passionately held. The Government must listen to those cries.

My argument is that perhaps the economy is rather stronger than the Front Bench is prepared to recognise, and some options that may be open to the Government to help employment are not as risky as they think. There is no doubt that the fight against inflation must continue. Few industries, and only a few people on the shop floor, feel any different. However, it is necessary to review some of our policies and in bringing public spending from the darkness into the light we are finding the virtue of spending money on projects that really matter rather than wasting it.

There is certainly further work to do in manufacturing. The British Chamber of Commerce report entitled, "British Manufacture in Decline 1975-1984" showed only too clearly what has happened in recent years. The most recent Manchester chamber of commerce and industry survey showed, sadly, a decline in orders in the last quarter after an encouraging 12 months. Almost anybody one speaks to in manufacturing industry will mention the problems of unstable exchange rates and high interest rates. It is important for the Government to realise that they must take those factors into consideration. Despite the good things happening in the economy, those are two basics that they must address. They have addressed many things with confidence and certainty and produced many good things. To address those two things will be of great assistance and will improve no end the credibility of the Government in my constituency.

The textile industry is looking for a firm stance by Government on the multi-fibre arrangement. The paper industry is looking for a firm stance on energy prices. All industries are seeking to ensure that Government play no part in increasing any of their basic costs and therefore ruining their competitiveness. In the past 12 months the record on that has been good. I thank the Government for that, but the pressure must be kept up.

Some years ago the noble Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, on one of his many television programmes, urged people to keep a small check list of prices behind the clock. Perhaps he had to sell the clock or more likely the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) sold the clock to cover the debts that the noble Lord had left. I should like the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to keep a small check list for industry behind his clock. He should see in his dreams a ball sitting on a football pitch about 10 yards out from the goalmouth. In his dreams he should rush towards it and, if he keeps his check list in mind, he will ensure that he is kicking the ball in the right direction and not hoofing it backwards towards his own goal.

First, my right hon. and learned Friend should ensure that costs to industry are continually reduced and that the Government play no part in putting up costs. Secondly, he should recognise that the future of high-tech is as much in the traditional manufacturing industries as in the high-tech industries themselves. He should be alert to the need for manufacturing industries to invest in capital projects in high tech. Not all the people who wish to have capital investment are covered by the Sulloin Voe complex. Capital investment is needed by manufacturing industry to retain jobs and the use of high tech in traditional manufacturing industries has been of tremendous benefit in my own constituency.

Thirdly, my right hon. and learned Friend should ensure that the Government's current commitment to the improvement of the infrastructure continues through improvements in roads, railways, and communications. That is the lifeblood of future industry. Fourthly, and perhaps most important, he should accept the word of industry about unfair foreign competition rather more readily than his Department does at the moment. All too often there is a long period of checking to see whether the allegations made by domestic industry are true, and by the time that is done the boat has gone and unfair foreign competition has triumphed.

I was pleased at what my right hon. and learned Friend said today about making sure we were as competitive as our foreign rivals. It is essential that he makes sure that his Department is aware of that. We cannot afford to slip up too often. He mentioned changes in the aid and trade provision programme. Some of these problems have hit my own constituency in recent years and a significant change in the Government's attitude to that would be warmly welcomed. Fifthly, he must encourage a better attitude in education towards manufacturing industry. For too long industry and trade have been looked upon as dirty, and something that clever people were not supposed to go into. Schools and universities have not emphasised trade and industry as much as they should have done, and progress towards ensuring a change in that attitude is essential.

Lastly, my right hon. and learned Friend must ensure that industry has a real partnership with Government. Having an industrial strategy need not mean massive Government intervention. The Government should recognise that some of the most successful economies in the western world are in countries where, although free enterprise has been given a full rein, Government have kept a close check on what has gone on. They have not intervened as such, but Government and industry together have had a strategy and a vision for the future. There is no reason why we should not do that.

I should like to return to a comment I made at the start of my speech. Speaking at Blackpool the Secretary of State said that his priority was to see the great regional divide in our country narrowed as quickly as possible. He was not afraid to say what many people have thought for

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

some time but have shied away from saying. It was a refreshing and bold statement and he knows full well he will get support from the Tory Benches as he puts into practice what he has preached so well. At last, we in the north know we have not been forgotten. The visit of his predecessor to the north of England at the start of the summer to see the new industry that was coming from the old, and the new challenges that the region was facing was a good step on the road to the Government's rehabilitation of the north of England.

If the Secretary of State can show himself as a robust defender of British industry, a fighter for fair competition in Europe and the wider world, a responsive listener about the concern of manufacturing industry, and an active partner in the common problems that beset manufacturing industry and the Government, he will have earned the thanks and support of Bury and us all.

8.26 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I should like to talk about the problems we would face if we tried to restore full employment in Britain. It has not been touched on by any Government speaker because the restoration of full employment has never even been a Government objective. [An hon. Member: "Rubbish."] It is not a Government objective and no Minister has ever spoken about the restoration of full employment. The problem of unemployment is a wide one and goes well beyond an economic debate. There is the tragedy of young people in Liverpool who have not worked since they left school and have no prospect of work, and the women who are doing part-time low-paid jobs and who will be affected for the worse by the change in Sunday trading.

Unemployment has an impact on the amount of money available for the public services and on the amount of money available for local government. There is also the effect of unemployment on the ethnic communities. But there is another aspect of unemployment and that is the cost. It is very simply costed, because the Government spend £7·5 billion a year on unemployment pay. The loss of taxation and national insurance as a result of 4 million unemployed is another £12·5 billion. That is £20 billion basic, but then there is a loss of production by the people who are unemployed.

If we take it as a reasonable assumption that people in work could have at least 80 per cent. of their production matched by those out of work, we are talking about another £52 billion of production if we had full employment. With so much suffering and so much cost, why have this Government abandoned the objective of full employment?

When I first came into the House 35 years ago this month, the idea of maintaining full employment was a consensus point. Harold Macmillan has now appeared in the House of Lords commenting again, but of course all Conservative leaders—Churchill, Eden, right through to the noble Lord—accepted that the maintenance of full employment was one of the central points of policy. It is fair to say that the policies pursued by the consensus Governments that followed one another did not succeed. That is why I do not listen with enthusiasm to Harold Macmillan while others do.

That was the objective and now that objective has been dropped. The fact that it has been dropped is not an accident. I have never accepted the idea of what is sometimes called Thatcherism. I do not believe that it is about monetarism, and I do not believe that political decisions are taken by going into a room with a cold towel round one's head and looking at a calculator to find out what the PSBR will be. After looking at the experience of the consensus years, the Government decided that they needed the dole to discipline the work force. That is what it is about.

The hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) said how happy people are and that they are all at one. What has happened is that the fear of unemployment has given management a power that it has not had since the 1920s or Victorian times.

Unemployment performs vital economic functions. It keeps wages down. If a worker goes to his employer and says, "I cannot live on the money," the employer will say that there are 4 million people on the dole who will be happy to do the job. For the same reason, unemployment weakens the unions. It undermines the public services, which are costly. The Government do not want to finance them. Unemployment justifies rate capping and, of course, it boosts profits. If wages are kept down, marvellous profit figures can be produced, and it is the profit figures that make the Cabinet confident, because they do not intend to go back to full employment and do not believe in doing so.

To restore full employment, it would be necessary, with 4 million unemployed and a five-year Parliament, to create 1 million new jobs a year. That is what it would take to get back to what was the consensus of all parties in Parliament for 40 years.

I take up the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton). Twice in my lifetime we have created 1 million new jobs a year, all funded by public expenditure. The first time was from 1938 to 1942. It was public expenditure on rearmament at the end of the 1930s that gave us 1 million new jobs a year. That was when the PSBR was 27 per cent. of the national output—10 times what it is today. If people are taken off the dole, put into armaments factories and taxed on their earnings, the project finances itself. It was done by very strong central direction and by public expenditure.

I do not need to stress to the House that rearmament was not done by private expenditure. Granny did not buy a Bren gun, mother did not have a tank, and father did not buy a Spitfire with an A registration. It was all done by the Government. People say that Government cannot create jobs. Of course they can, if they wish to do so.

The second example was from 1945 to 1948, when we brought 3 million service men out of the armed forces and put them back to work. It was the biggest example of defence conversion that there has ever been. Compared with it, the problems of defence conversion that an incoming Labour Government would face would be simple. In Bristol, my old constituency, the Bristol Aeroplane Company, as it used to be, stopped sending out trucks with Blenheim bombers and a few months later it was producing prefabricated houses. That was done by having a central control over the economy. The powers were there and the objective was clear. The powers were used. If we want to restore full employment, it will not be done by tinkering about with the PSBR.

I did not hear the whole of the speech of the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), but anyone who thinks that joining the European monetary system and

going back to an incomes policy will get us back to full employment is absolutely wrong, because those actions are simply tinkering on the margin. If we want to get back to full employment—the objective that we should set ourselves in Britain, for a range of social, political and economic reasons—we shall have to do more than that. We must re-equip and re-establish British manufacturing industry by direct methods. It is no good speaking about industry as if it is an optional extra, assuming that if it loses it can be closed down, as if manufacturing is like white side-walled tyres—one has it if one can afford it. We have got to have industry.

One of the reasons why the Japanese are so successful is that they look ahead for 10 or 20 years. Any sensible planning of a modern society would include the planning of investment in high technology industries and in the maintenance of what are now called the smokestack industries, mainly to justify closing them.

Next, we would have to refurbish and develop the infrastructure. I am often amazed when I see industrialists whose whole market depends on public expenditure calling for cuts in public expenditure. Hon. Members will know the old joke in the construction industry that sewage is their bread and butter. When sewers are renewed and when bridges are built, there are jobs for the construction industry, and we need a modern infrastructure, but that would involve public expenditure.

Next, we would have to expand the public services. If it is said that now that we have the microchip there is no demand, I could take any Member of this House, as other hon. Members could, to hundreds of houses where there are old people. In the modern jargon, they are now called the psycho-geriatrics. They are simply a bit old and confused. They need homes to live in; they need 24-hours-a-day care. To meet their needs would create jobs. We need day centres. We need creches so that women can be released to go to work or to college. No one can persuade me that Britain is not full of things that need to be done. Just as rearmament brought us back to full employment, so the expansion of the public services can bring us back to full employment.

If technology allows us to achieve the necessary national output without seven days a week of back-breaking work, let us have earlier retirement and a shorter working week. Let us raise the school-leaving age, and enable adults to go in and out of education. If we wish to do those things, we shall have to plan our trade, for if we reflate the economy when we have not a manufacturing base we shall be flooded, not with imports of the raw materials or engineering products which will be needed, but with consumer products.

If people had to wait a little longer for a Honda but could get a hip operation a bit sooner, what would be wrong with that? That is the sort of priority we would have to set. Unemployment is a form of import control. An unemployed person cannot afford a Japanese video, French wine or American tobacco. The Government have import controls, but they apply only to the unemployed, the low-paid and the people living on supplementary benefits.

We would have to stop the export of capital. Since the Government came to power, for every family of four, £4,300 has left Britain. The Chancellor of the Exchequer says that we must tighten our belts because that is the way to solve the problem. But if a worker tightens his belt, the employer sends the money to South Africa, where the wages are lower still, because Botha's police will not allow the unions to organise. The export of capital could not continue if we wished to solve the unemployment problem.

We would also have to ease the arms burden. I have already mentioned Japan, but people do not often talk openly of the fact that the Japanese spend only 1 per cent. of a much bigger national income on defence. We spend 6 per cent. Why are the shops in Britain full of Japanese videos, cameras and motor cycles? It is because that is what the Japanese produce. Our Government's hopes are based on tourism and selling battlefield communications systems to the Americans. We have abandoned the serious intent of being a major manufacturing nation. That policy would have to change.

The Secretary of State for Defence comes to every household every week and takes £24 off a family of four to finance the defence burden.

We would have to deal with the treaty of Rome. We could not solve any of the problems under a constitution which makes it illegal to intervene with market forces.

We would have to have a major expansion of public responsibility and control over our economy.

I do not believe that anything less than the measures I have outlined would bring us anywhere near to the achievement of full employment. The Government do not want it. The wets could not get it, although they tried. The SDP-Liberal alliance thinks that if we squeeze the wages in Whitehall, join the European monetary system and have a federal Europe, full employment will come automatically.

The Mitterrand dash for growth came a cropper because he did not really deal with the power structure. His economy zoomed up and fell flat. Mitterrand's policy failed because, apart from anything else, he could not escape from the treaty of Rome. The treaty of Rome and the way in which it operated brought down the French economy.

To achieve full employment, we need fundamental changes in our policy and in our thinking. If this House is to be a forum for the nation, one of its functions is to tell the people outside that we cannot have full employment simply by tinkering with the economy. If we want full employment again, we have to set the objective and take the powers to bring it about. We must have the courage to implement it. That is what the choice will be when the general election comes. It will not be much influenced by whether there are a few tax cuts, purchased by selling off public assets. The choice will be a basic one. I have a feeling that, after their experience with this Government, the British people will be ready to take it.

8.39 pm

Mr. David Knox (Staffordshire, Moorlands): Because of the shortage of time, I hope that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) does not mind if I do not take up the points he made, tempting as that is. He may be surprised to hear that I am concerned about a return to full employment, but my route to that objective would be different from the one he has been talking about.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer both painted a bullish picture of the British economy when they spoke earlier. That may have impressed the City and some of the national press.

[Mr. David Knox]

I doubt if they impressed many others, particularly those living in the north and those engaged in manufacturing industry, far less those who are unemployed.

It is very difficult to accept that the economy is prospering when over 3 million are out of work. It will continue to be difficult to accept that all is going well until such time as unemployment starts to fall, falls substantially and looks like continuing to fall. I see no sign of that at present.

As an economic problem, unemployment involves a scandalous waste of resources, lost production and lost national wealth. As a social problem, unemployment is divisive and undoubtedly contributes to social unrest. That is why unemployment is the principal problem facing the Government in the current Session of Parliament, as it has been for several years. Against that problem the proposed legislative measures of the Gracious Speech pale into insignificance.

For 30 years immediately following the war, we had full employment. Over the last 11 years, under both Labour and Conservative Governments, we have seen unemployment rise from under 500,000 to its present unacceptable level. Some choose to blame the policies that were pursued in the 30 years immediately after the war. Others try to heap all the blame on the Government headed by the Earl of Stockton, even though it is 22 years since he ceased to be Prime Minister. I think both those are absurd propositions. It is much more likely that the increase in unemployment in the last 11 years has been because of the policies pursued during those years. In a word, the increase in unemployment since 1974 has come about because of the lack of economic stability abroad and because of the pursuit of monetarist policies at home, with their consequent demand deflationary effects.

If we are to make any impact on the level of unemployment — that should be our highest national objective — we must try to stabilise the international economic environment in which we operate as far as that is possible and we must raise the level of demand in our domestic economy. I regret that there is no mention of either in the Gracious Speech.

In the first 25 years after the war we had relative stability in exchange rates under the terms of the Bretton Woods agreement. It provided the countries of the world with a stable international economic order in which their economies could expand. It was particularly beneficial to a country like Britain which has to export a high proportion of its national income to pay for necessary raw materials and foodstuffs. In the early 1970s unfortunately, Bretton Woods broke down, with disastrous results.

In recent years currencies have fluctuated violently. We have seen the value of the pound rising and falling by terrifying amounts over comparatively short periods, with consequential disruption to our domestic economy. At one moment that has made our exports much too dear; at another it has made them too cheap. Again and again when I have visited manufacturing firms in my constituency I have been told of the damage that has been done to their trade by constant changes in the value of the pound.

Although high exchange rates can be damaging to manufacturing industry, it is the constant changes in the exchange rate that do most damage. That may not be perceived by the Treasury as a problem. It may not be perceived by the City of London as a problem, because money can be made in the City from currency fluctuations, but it is a problem for those whose primary functions are to design, manufacture and sell products and who rarely have an interest in high finance. The present position is therefore very unsatisfactory.

I do not believe that it is possible to negotiate a new Bretton Woods now. It should be an objective in the long term but this country can do something to help itself immediately, and that is, to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. That would provide us with much greater stability for 60 per cent. of our trade than we enjoy now. Once we were full members of the European monetary system we could start to play a part through the European community in trying to negotiate with the United States and Japan an even wider area of international stability. Such stability can only be in the interests of this country. I hope, therefore, that the omission of any reference to the EMS in the Gracious Speech does not mean that another year will be allowed to pass before we join the exchange rate mechanism.

Full membership of the EMS would not in itself result in a return to full employment although it would help. A substantial increase in the level of demand in the British domestic economy would be required to take up the slack and bring people back into jobs. Without an increase in demand there can be no significant increase in employment. Without an increase in demand, the work that my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment and my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General are doing will have little or no effect on the level of employment. The jobs that their policies create will merely replace jobs that disappear elsewhere. If the public, individually or collectively, do not have the means to buy more goods and services, there will be no demand for more goods and services and consequently no demand for extra labour to produce them.

Nor will demand rise automatically. The Government and only the Government can do anything about the general level of demand in the economy. They can raise demand by reducing taxation whilst not decreasing public expenditure, or by increasing public expenditure whilst not increasing taxation, or by a mixture of the two. Put more simply, the Government can increase demand by increasing the public sector borrowing requirement. It is nonsense to suggest that that would be inflationary, for there is plenty of spare capacity in the economy.

Now that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has discarded that symbol of monetarism, M3, I hope that his next step will be to discard the medium-term financial strategy. If that is asking too much, perhaps he could take a more relaxed attitude towards it. If he does not, there can be no hope of a significant reduction in unemployment. We need reduced taxation to encourage increased private consumption and we need increased Government expenditure, particularly capital expenditure. While it would be foolish to embark on an immediately massive reflation, we should be aiming at a growth rate of 5 to 6 per cent. a year, generated by expansionist Government economic policies. Unless we get something of that order we shall not make a real impact on unemployment.

There is urgency about taking such action for balance of payments reasons. In the years ahead North sea oil will have a diminishing effect on the balance of payments. The longer we leave off the necessary expansion of the

economy to reduce unemployment the more risky it becomes in balance of payments terms. So for every reason urgent action is required.

There is one final point that I should like to make. I made it in the debate on the Gracious Speech in 1983 and again in the debate on the Gracious Speech last year. At the last general election, the electorate gave the Government the benefit of the doubt over unemployment. They were not satisfied with the Government's performance, but they did not believe that either of the other two parties would do any better. At the next general election, if unemployment is not falling, there is a great danger that the British people will conclude that the Government have had their chance and that the time has come to give one of the other parties a chance, even if they are not totally convinced that that other party can do any better. I would regret that as much as any of my right hon. and hon. Friends.

8.50 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I do not propose to comment generally on the speech of the hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) because time is short. His opposition to the Government's policy made it difficult to see why he should vote against our amendment.

We are having an artificial debate because we have had the Chancellor's autumn statement and tomorrow it is proposed that we debate the economy, as if a debate on industry and employment was remote and detached from a debate on the economy, and as if macro-economic policy was remote and distant from micro-economic policy.

I come from a constituency with a varied industrial base. I should like to refer to the mining industry. Last year, when we were in the middle of the mining dispute, there was harsh and brutal management in the Scottish coalfields. The managers dismissed more than 200 Scottish miners because of their activities in the dispute. Fortunately, there has been a change in personnel in the National Coal Board in Scotland and there have been moves to re-engage some of the miners who were branded as criminals by the then director. I would not place too much on the hope, but I hope that the process is accelerated and that all the 200 miners dismissed during the dispute return to work. The harshness of industrial management as exhibited by the coal board at that time should not be perpetuated into the future. I take the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). It is not right for the Government to use unemployment and harsh industrial techniques as threats against the labour force.

Several hon. Members have referred to the importance of oil in the economy. I shall try to set my remarks in the context of the Government's view of oil. The Brown Book of 1985 gave the following figures. The total disposals of United Kingdom continental shelf oil in 1984 amounted to 125 million tonnes and 45·4 million tonnes were delivered to United Kingdom refineries, constituting 60 per cent. of the total delivery of United Kingdom refineries. A total of 24·2 million tonnes of foreign crude was imported during the year, compared with exports of United Kingdom continental shelf crude of 77 million tonnes.

Oil has been used not so that we get a balanced fuel or energy policy but simply to provide Government revenues and, of course, to bolster the balance of payments. There is no other reason for our producing oil in such excessive amounts. The Government have abandoned any thought of a depletion policy.

Let us examine other economies with no domestic production of oil such as West Germany and Japan and how they took the shocks of 1974 and 1979. There was an impact on their balance of payments, but their strategy was different from that pursued by Governments of both political colours in this country. The Labour Government borrowed against potential oil production. The Conservative Government have used oil to bolster the balance of payments. However, West Germany and Japan did not narrow their industrial manufacturing base but broadened and deepened it. If anyone has doubts about that, he should read the report of the Select Committee on Overseas Trade in another place, which said succinctly in paragraph 23:

> "The ten countries with which the United Kingdom had either the largest surpluses or the largest deficits in 1984 are shown in Table 2.7. Generally speaking, with one or two exceptions, surpluses have been achieved with less developed countries and deficits incurred in more developed countries. It is perhaps worth noting that the worst trade balances in manufactures are with West Germany, Japan and Italy, and that the worst of all is with West Germany."

West Germany is a nation without the benefit of oil.

I do not wholly share some of the views expressed by Opposition Members. I do not think that there will be a dramatic turn-round in production. The Government's figures are reasonably secure. There will be a small slack, but the problem is like a drug addict coming out of his addiction. How should we tackle it in balance of payments and exchange terms? We must also consider what is happening to other aspects of the international oil market.

We are in a farcical position. The production of Norway and ourselves has exceeded that of the Saudis, and on occasion ours has been more than that of the Saudis. If we move to cheap oil, nations such as Germany and Japan, having secured their industrial base, will get the benefit. If oil becomes cheaper, production in the North sea will be adversely affected, as well as Government revenues. We are in a Catch 22 situation. That would be extremely damaging particularly because we have adopted a policy of letting our manufacturing industry go. We could not recover overnight.

If we had used the revenues from North sea oil to enhance our productive capacity in future, one area of prime concern would have been the allocation of resources to research and development expenditure in the United Kingdom. Have we done that? There is no evidence of it whatsoever. I quote from the presidential address made to the British Association in August of this year by Sir Hans Kornberg:

> "During the year 1983/84 the five Research Councils spent just over £480 million and the UGC £551 million. If one assumes that roughly one-third of the UGC's expenditure was for the support of research, the total expenditure for research from the DES was roughly £664 million."

That is DES research expenditure which should be financing industrial innovation in the future. We did that for education-based research. But what did we spend on research and development for the Ministry of Defence? We spent £2,000 million on defence-related research and development. That is twisting and tilting the economy in terms of our expenditure in a fashion that I believe to be wrong and, in the long run, harmful to our economy.

I turn briefly to the way in which Governments deal with Select Committee reports. We have heard the

[Mr. Dick Douglas]

disparaging remarks made by Government Ministers about the report of a Select Committee of the House of Lords. I represent a constituency which has a large number of people employed in dockyards and I am wondering how Conservative Members will vote when the Bill which has been announced today is given a Second Reading.

Two Committees looked at the proposals relating to dockyards, the Public Accounts Committee and the Select Committee on Defence. They were not filled with Labour Back Benchers, of an extreme Left-wing persuasion or otherwise, but were dominated by Conservatives. Both Committees argued that the Government had failed to prove their case in relation to their objective of commercialisation for the dockyards. Did the Government halt? A wise and prudent manger, faced with this searching examination, would have cried, "Halt. I may have got it wrong", but not the Secretary of State for Defence. He goes on and imperils both industrial relations in the dockyards and the capability of those dockyards, which have served the Navy well for a long time.

These policies should be opposed by a prudent House of Commons willing to evaluate the arguments. The trouble with this Government, however, is that they are not persuaded by arguments. If I were to ask the Secretary of State why he is going ahead with this foolhardy policy on the dockyards, he would say that he is doing it from a doctrinaire approach. It is not something that he can prove in terms of savings, employment, service to the Navy or strategic importance. It is something that he considers desirable and so it has to be conceded and we must go on with it. I hope that Conservative Members will weigh these points about the dockyards extremely carefully.

Last night I switched on the television in time to hear the Prime Minister speaking at the Mansion house. From the way that she was dressed, I thought for a minute that we had Flora Robson in colour, but it was not so. She talked about jobs being important and about creating employment because it conferred a feeling of belonging. She accepts that argument, as would everyone in the House, but she does not accept the obverse.

The most important point about having some 3 million to 4 million unemployed is the feeling of alienation that it engenders. I ask Conservative Members to acknowledge that the cost of being unemployed is a feeling of not belonging, a feeling of alienation, of being apart. Neither this Government nor any other has the right to concentrate attention on tax cuts which will benefit the 85 per cent. in employment and forget the 15 per cent. who are alienated by unemployment.

If Conservative Members who have made so many critical speeches of the Government really examined our amendment, they would have the courage of their convictions and vote for it.

9.2 pm

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Hon. Members will recall last Wednesday's brilliant autumn weather when the Queen opened Parliament in such splendour. Shortly afterwards, in the debate, I noted that the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan), after making some fairly unpleasing remarks about having to go to the House of Lords to hear the Gracious Speech, said that we on the Government side of the House knew nothing of real people — people, he said, outside the House. Immediately after the Gracious Speech, I went outside the House and joined the vast and friendly throng in the street. Just in front of me was a very rough-looking man. As the Queen passed in her coach, he gave out such a cheer that it almost burst my eardrums. That, I believe, was the voice of the real people in this country, which is so different from the figment of the hon. Gentleman's imagination. In spite of our differences, we must never forget the essential, underlying unity of this kingdom.

I welcome many of the proposals in the Gracious Speech. I am sorry that once again there appears to be too many Bills clogging our time and over-emphasising our law-making capacity, to the detriment of our duty to check the Executive and ensure as far as possible that the Government govern well and spend taxpayers' money wisely.

The Government have a difficult political choice in deciding whether to continue with their necessary reforms —such as more privatising, which which I thoroughly agree—or to rein back on some of those measures for fear of giving the public indigestion. The British people will be led but not driven.

In the main, the public still support the chief planks of the Government's programme, particularly on subjects such as law and order, defence and making the trade unions more democratic. However, the Government have proposed other measures — such as the new Sunday trading laws—which, I fear, may not be so popular.

There is great public concern about law and order following the appalling riots in our cities; and the public order legislation will be widely welcomed. The most vulnerable people in society — the old and infirm, children and young women—need the most protection. People expect severe sentences for all crimes of violence, such as assault, rape and mugging, as well as rioting, arson and throwing petrol bombs. They also expect the laws of England to be applied impartially to black, brown and white people. They expect the police to have all the necessary equipment to deal with riots.

In respect of all those matters, the nation is facing a moral crisis. Yesterday the Lord Chancellor said that this country was falling into moral decay and he warned that that could lead to anarchy and tyranny. There are also dreadful statistics for divorces, broken marriages and one-parent families.

I sometimes wish that the Government would give more of a moral lead. The protection of the family, for instance, is vital for the stability of society. I hope that the Government will come down firmly against embryo research.

In am not a fanatic about Sunday trading. We cannot make people good by Act of Parliament. In countries where churchgoing is greater than it is here — for example, in Scotland or France—there has been Sunday trading for many years. I realise also the anomalies in the present laws which should be put right.

Nevertheless, I do not want Sunday to be as any other day. There is enough irreligion now not to give it any further encouragement. Nor do I want the Government to appear money-grubbing and wholly commercial in their attitude to the matter. Unless the new laws are strictly limited in their effect, I shall not be able to support them. The Government should support churchgoing and certainly not do anything to make it more difficult. Also, I should be sorry to see a head-on clash with the churches on this issue.

I welcome the broadening of the powers of the building societies, setting them out in an appropriate framework. They will benefit from being able to offer more services and compete more equally with other retail institutions. Consumers will benefit from the wider range of services which they will be able to give.

I also welcome the laws proposed against the drug traffic and drug-taking, which is such an appalling menace to society and particularly to our young people.

This debate is mainly about industry and employment. As I represent a constituency in the west midlands, which used to be the heart of the nation's industrial effort, I have seen great decline and rising unemployment in the last few years. However, the picture is not as black as some Opposition Members have painted it. For instance, there is a vast improvement in labour relations, no doubt following the defeat of Scargillism last year. Industrialists and people on the shop floor in my area seldom complain. Few of them have alternative policies to suggest to those at present being pursued.

Unfortunately, the Government still give the impression of not being as interested in manufacturing industry as they should be. Many people believe that industry is not recruiting the best men and that salaries are woefully low compared with those paid in the City of London and the professions. The Government must take greater care to explain their policies more fully in words that ordinary people can easily understand. Too often, the Government lose their case by default. For instance, people believe that there have been cuts in public expenditure, when in some cases it has been increased.

The steady reduction in the inflation rate is widely welcomed in my constituency, especially among pensioners. Unemployment is levelling out and will probably go down. There is a welcome increase in job vacancies and new jobs being created. I welcome the vigour shown by my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Young in his new post and the new initiatives to deal with unemployment. I am especially pleased that the armed forces will do more training. They are probably the best trainers in the country.

The Queen's Speech does not mention immigration—a subject rarely debated in the House. We should be honest and realise that immigrants and the minority English communities in areas of high immigration wonder what the future will be for the next generation when immigrants will form perhaps one third of the total population. That serious matter must be considered now so that immigrants and English people can have confidence in their future.

The Gracious Speech sounded a confident note on foreign affairs. For the first time for many years there is a slight possibility that some form of arms control, if not disarmament, will be possible among the great powers

On my visits abroad last year, I found that Britain and our Prime Minister were deeply respected. Our embassies do a splendid job in many capital cities and especially on the commercial side where great help is given to British business men. I hope that there will be no reduction in the Foreign Office Vote or in the overseas service of the BBC.

In general, I do not believe that the picture in Britain is anything like as black as it has been painted by the Opposition. People abroad still look up enormously to this country, to our form of government, our tolerance, our way of life, our traditions and to so much for which we should be thankful. We should remember that and count our blessings. The Government must remain steady on their course. If they do so, they will deserve the support of all people of good will.

9.14 pm

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): Listening to the statistics trotted out by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to prove that some great recovery is taking place, I was irresistibly reminded of the famous phrase quoted by a previous Conservative Prime Minister:

"lies, damned lies and statistics."

I am sure that the Ministers were not telling lies, but they were manipulating statistics to prove the existence of a non-existent recovery.

I was pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) emphasised the importance of the steel industry. Steelmaking is the best barometer of manufacturing industry. All manufacturers use steel—as a raw material, as machinery or as both. If, as the Government say, there is a marvellous recovery, why did a representative of the British Steel Corporation tell the Select Committee on Trade and Industry as recently as June—we were told this last year and the year before — that the corporation can foresee no increase in the demand for steel in Britain? That is why the corporation wishes to close more plants after those they have already announced. Tinsley park works in Sheffield will close in three weeks' time, causing hundreds more of my constituents to lose their jobs. If there is a recovery, why is there no foreseeable increase in the demand for steel? That simple question must be answered.

We are talking about the new high-productivity, slimline steel industry—an industry that has lost at least 120,000 jobs during the past five years, an industry in which all the alleged overmanning has been ruthlessly cut out and in which all the so-called excess capacity has already been closed. The corporation is saying that, despite the high productivity and the fact that the industry has become competitive, there will be no increase in demand. Do Ministers know what they are talking about? Do they know what is happening in British industry? Only a couple of weeks ago at Question Time, the Minister of State assured me that rumours about closures and redundancies in my constituency were "pure speculation". However, while he was telling me that, the BSC was busily announcing another substantial batch of redundancies at the Rotherham works. It is his job to know what is happening and my job to try to find out, but he certainly did not know that. Do Ministers really believe what they are telling us about a recovery? They should visit south Yorkshire to see the devastation for themselves. Let them visit the industrial wastelands, the desolate empty factories, the shut-down mills and melting shops in what used to be the biggest centre of steelmaking and heavy engineering in the world. It is heart-breaking to see that.

I wish that Ministers would explain to my constituents, who are being made redundant in their hundreds every month, why they are losing their jobs when we are having such a marvellous recovery. They are entitled to such an explanation. I wish they would explain to the youngsters leaving school this year why they have no hope of obtaining proper jobs.

Several hon. Members have mentioned small businesses, whose development I strongly support. I was involved in that area before I entered the House. But it

[Mr. Stan Crowther]

would take many small businesses to create the 20,000 jobs that we need in Rotherham today, not in five or 10 years' time — *[Interruption.]* Ministers should do something about it instead of sitting on the Front Bench laughing and chortling. It is a serious matter in my constituency.

The overriding need today is to get our wealth-creating manufacturing industry back on its feet in our great industrial regions. Those areas created the foundations of our national prosperity and, given half a chance, they would do so again.

9.20 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I apologise to hon. Members if I was not here for part of the debate, although I have attended the greater part of it.

The debate has reflected what is apparently the new tone in the unemployment debate—public expenditure is now "in". After the Prime Minister's speech last night, it appears that public expenditure can create jobs and is actually planned to achieve that objective. A good example of that principle was revealed in the Paymaster General's speech, which presented a number of proposals specifically designed to reduce the level of unemployment and to provide more employment measures although they are not what the Opposition would call real jobs.

Following the exchanges in the House earlier this evening, I examined the autumn statement, which I see claims:

"from the employment measures, the trend in unemployment should continue to be more favourable than over the last two years."

As I suggested earlier, the autumn statement says that 100,000 on community schemes and possibly 100,000 on YTS will reduce unemployment by perhaps 250,000. That is a fiddling of the figures to show that, by election time, the unemployment figures have gone down.

I welcome, and will not knock, the fact that the Government are convinced that more public expenditure can reduce unemployment. That is the heart of the argument and the alternative put forward by the Opposition. Hon. Members have tonight proposed several choices which the Government could pursue to create more employment. Both sides of the House have agreed that, while we may be critical of relying on tourism to provide jobs—I welcome jobs wherever they come from —we should not encourage tourism at the expense of our manufacturing base, which continues to decline.

It is not satisfactory for Ministers to talk about record levels of investment when it is the level of investment in manufacturing that is important. The important area is that of manufacture and the creation of wealth. A study of investment in manufacturing reveals that there is a long way to go before either output or investment figures reach the 1979 level. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry should be made aware of that and I address his attention to it.

The right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) made a sound and important point about growth. We cannot continue to rely on growth alone to create full employment. In the past two decades, each increase in growth has produced fewer and fewer jobs. Growth now has a negative effect upon jobs. We simply cannot rely on growth to provide full employment. A mixture of public and private investment is crucial if the Government want to reduce unemployment.

I welcome the Paymaster General to his first debate on employment in his new capacity, but I strongly deplore the fact that the Secretary of State for Employment should be in another place — *[Interruption.]* are hon. Members telling me that he is observing?—particularly as he is the architect of most of the current policies, which involve low pay, part-time work, and an awful lot of low-quality training in manpower schemes. The Secretary of State for Employment is more responsible for Government policy than the Paymaster General and he should answer for the Government.

Mr. Baldry *rose*——

Mr. Prescott: I have not time to give way.

I hope that the Secretary of State will not lecture us about democracy in the trade unions. Before he does that he should seek election himself, be elected and come to the House.

Nevertheless, I welcome the Paymaster General, who has, in all his jobs so far, been the best man rather than the groom. I believe that he is concerned about facts and about the argument. As the debate about unemployment is about to take place, will he agree the basic common facts so that the debate may be about truth and the facts rather than a contest on the issue? That has often been the case in the House and elsewhere, when the monthly unemployment figures are announced.

I have been to the Library to discover the real level of unemployment. We know that 3·27 million people are registered as unemployed, but that is the Government's first fiddle. On the basis of the Labour Government's criteria, about 3·6 million people would be registered as unemployed. I am sure that we can agree on the figures produced by the Library calculated on the basis of the labour force survey. If we add to the total the number of unemployed males aged 60 to 64, the number of unemployed non-claimants, those who have temporarily stopped work and the effects of special employment and training schemes, the total comes to 4·75 million looking for work. If we add to that figure the 250,000 that the Minister is fiddling today, unemployment stands at 5 million on the basis of the Government's own figures and the labour force survey. I do not want to argue about that — *[Interruption.]* Provided that we can accept the Library's figures, based on the labour force survey, unemployment runs at 4·75 million. I am quite prepared to accept 3 million, which is higher than we had in the 1930s. At least we can agree on the number of people looking for work on the Department's figures.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prescott: I cannot—I do not have the time.

I hope that the Paymaster General also agrees that unemployment in Britain has been higher than in Europe. The OECD figures show that. If I had the time, I could refer to the relevant tables. Britain's unemployment average has always been the average of European OECD countries—until 1979. As for the percentage increase in unemployment in Britain, the Library, using OECD figures says:

"Had the United Kingdom unemployment rate worsened at the same rate as the OECD average, the current unemployment rate would be approximately 1 million lower than it actually is."

Can we agree, therefore, that our unemployment is higher than in our competitor countries in Europe? The evidence is clear.

Previous Secretaries of State have often said that our working population represents a larger proportion of the total than in the rest of Europe. It has always been so. Since 1979, however, that proportion has fallen more than the average in Europe. It is therefore not correct for the Government to claim that they have been successful. Indeed, the deterioration has been accelerated by the Government's policies.

The Opposition argue that most of the changes have been brought about by the Government's policies. An OECD report compares the public expenditure pattern in Britain with that in European OECD countries. The cuts in transport, hospitals and roads have been much deeper here than in Europe. That is given as one reason why unemployment here is higher. We should agree, therefore, that Government policy has reduced inflation and consequently thrown many more people out of work. For every 1 per cent. fall in inflation, three quarters of a million people have been thrown on the dole. The price of the Government's anti-inflation policy has been mass unemployment.

The charge against the Government is that they have deliberately brought about mass unemployment by choosing to pursue monetary economic policies. Unemployment is therefore higher than elsewhere, it results from Government policy and it is a deliberate part of policy.

A committee of experts in the International Labour Organisation has produced a white paper calling on all ILO countries to agree that full employment must be a major aspect of Government policy. The Government are refusing to ratify that recommendation. The committee of experts has examined the Government's policy and it says:

"the Committee . . . is bound to stress that, even in an economic strategy which regards (stable prices and competitiveness) as the ultimate aim, an active employment policy must, in the terms of the Convention . . . be pursued as a major goal."

The experts said:

"the Government's present policy had not been able to give satisfactory results in this respect; the Conference considered that it was the Government which had the primary responsibility in this area".

Even the experts from other countries who have examined Britain's economic policy have agreed that mass unemployment has arisen directly from the Government's policy and their consequent decisions, for whatever reason. It is directly induced mass unemployment, which begs the question whether the Government deliberately intend to achieve that end.

If the committee of experts in the ILO was looking for comfort from the Queen's Speech, all it can see is further notice that the Government intend to abrogate their international obligations and conventions. They see the abrogating of the Truck Acts and wages council legislation. Britain is the only country among 92 to seek to solve its unemployment by attacking the low paid in wages council industries. That is the reality of the Queen's Speech and what the Government are now saying is the solution to unemployment.

When we look at the Truck Acts and the reform of the wages councils, which will be opposed bitterly by the Opposition, we need to understand precisely what the Government are about to do, and why. We must begin to understand the relevance of mass unemployment from their point of view and the way that they are out to discipline the labour market and workers, particularly in low-paid jobs.

By abolishing the Truck Acts and reforming the wages councils, the Government are introducing a 19th-century solution. They are returning to Victorian values, to the sweated industries of Britain in the 19th century. They wish to remove current protections and reintroduce the 1880s to the 1980s. I can justify that assertion by analysing some of the proposed changes. What do the Government intend to do by reforming the Truck Acts and abrogating our international obligations? They apparently desire to make sure that everybody can be paid by cheque instead of cash. If that is to be the case, it removes choice from the individual.

The Government are always talking about choice and the individual, but he will no longer be able to exercise his preference to be paid in cash rather than by cheque. The individual will now have to pay £40 or £60 a year in bank charges, which is a large sum for someone who is not earning much money each week. *[Laughter.]* Conservative Members laugh, but that is the reality. There is also the problem that bank opening times are not convenient for many workers.

Why should the individual not have the right to choose whether he is paid in cash or by cheque? The Conservative party lectures us about individuals and their rights but Britain is the only country to take this course. Britain is also the only country to remove protection from the employee for deductions. What will that mean? Does it mean that the employer will have the right—unless it is written into the contract that he does not — to make deductions for disciplinary offences, tool charges, light and heat? That is what used to happen in the 19th century. By removing these controls one invites the employer, who already feels he has the whip hand, to impose adverse conditions on workers.

What is threatened by the reform of the wages councils? The Government are threatening to remove protection for young people under 21. That will affect half a million of our youngsters who are on low wages, such as my son, who was an apprentice hairdresser. He was receiving only £23 a week. It would have affected me in the days when I was commis chef and worked under wages council regulations. I know the conditions of wages councils because I had to live under them. Not many Conservative Members could tell us about that.

Mr. Warren: I could.

Mr. Prescott: The hon. Gentleman will probably agree with what I am going to say, and I hope that he will vote against the Government's proposals for wages councils. If we remove the young people from their protection and fix a single rate of pay, nothing will be done for holiday provision—indeed, holiday protection will be reduced. Nothing will be done about the rate differentials, so there will be a single rate.

All these conditions are currently protected by the wages councils. The Government's proposals seem to be designed to make conditions even more deplorable and to shift the balance even more in favour of the employer at the place of work. This will happen in areas where workers are at their weakest. We have an obligation under the ILO to ensure that workers who are in the weakest position are not subjected to the sort of legislation that the Government propose.

[Mr. Prescott]

The Minister talks about the reform of the wages councils and I predict that the Government intend to channel our youngsters into wages council industries. That will enable them to ease the rate of unemployment among those who have completed YTS courses. I understand that about 50 per cent. of those who leave the courses are unable to obtain jobs. The Government intend that they should skivvy in kitchens, wait in hotels or work in shops. That sort of job is being set up for our youngsters. [HON. MEMBERS: "Disgraceful."] Perhaps I should tell Conservative Members that the right hon. member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) made a similar statement in a Cabinet paper in 1981 when he was Secretary of State for Employment. I am only repeating the words of the right hon. Gentleman.

The Government plan to replace the women who are working in kitchens, hotels and shops for £50 or £60 a week with youngsters who have completed YTS schemes. Their intention is to pay them about £40 a week. That will reduce unemployment because many women work part time and cannot register as unemployed. Secondly, it will take more youngsters off YTS schemes. Youngsters will undertake the work that is currently performed by women but at lower rates of pay and this will produce an overall downward shift in wage levels. The Opposition believe that that is the Government's aim. They wish to reduce the wage levels of the lowest paid.

Where is the evidence that lower rates of pay produce more employment opportunities? The Government have often made that claim but the evidence that is available seems to refute it. Over the past five years, wages have fallen the most in areas of employment that are low paid. The gap between the low-paid and the highest paid has grown considerably over that period. At the same time, unemployment has increased faster among the low-paid.

We know that the Government have examined wage levels in the clothing industry. The evidence produced by the Department of Employment, which reflected the position of garment workers, was examined by the Cambridge department of applied economics, which claimed that the Department had used incorrect figures. It stated that some of the Department's key assumptions were false and that its analysis was inadequate. It stated that, if the Department had used the correct figures, its study would have revealed that

"the rise in male minimum rates produced a small fall in employment, while the larger rise in female minimum rates increased employment by a greater percentage."

The Government produced a fiddled piece of research, like their fiddled unemployment figures.

The fiddle does not end there. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said, as did the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) when he was appointed Paymaster General, that a 1 per cent. fall in wages would lead to 150,000 more jobs. Where is the evidence for that? That controversial claim was analysed by Warwick university's economic model group and it found that the increase in jobs would be about 15,000 instead of 150,000. It found that outcome difficult to understand, so it examined the model further. It concluded:

"The estimates that we obtain reveal a much smaller employment response than that predicted by the Chancellor."

I suppose that 15,000 is much less than 150,000. It continued:

"Part of this difference is attributable to revisions in the Treasury model".

Even the Treasury model was got at to produce the figure of 150,000. It is clear that there are fiddles in every figure that the Government produce. We know that that is so but —*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may choose to shout, but I do not hear any substantial rejection of the Warwick study.

The Government's real purpose is to strengthen the power of the employer at the place of work, to attack those on low incomes and to encourage employers not to pay basic wages.

The Silentnight dispute had been going on for 20 weeks when the Under-Secretary of State for Employment made a deplorable speech in the House; it was even attacked by the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph*—a Tory paper—on the grounds that the Minister had sided with the employer. I ask the Paymaster General in all seriousness to get the papers from ACAS and look at them, because there is a role for Government in arbitration in these matters.

The Government's whole policy is designed to reduce low wage rates and to attack the lowest paid by removing protections from them. That is what the Queen's Speech is about. As for the Government's promised 600,000 jobs, 400,000 of those jobs are part-time. The Secretary of State talks about the European analysis. In this country, full-time jobs are being replaced by part-time jobs at a rate unparalleled anywhere else in Europe. The Government have embarked on a part-time low-paid economy. I have analysed the figures for the increase in full-time job equivalents of which the Secretary of State talks. It will take him 70 years to get back to the level of employment that he inherited from the Labour Government in 1979.

Let there be no mistake: we know what the Government are doing. Unemployment in this country is higher and deeper than it is anywhere else. It is deliberate Government policy to impose burdens on those least able to bear them. We shall do everything that we can to oppose that policy in the coming Session.

9.41 pm

The Paymaster General (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I begin by noting a remarkable event which took place in today's debate. The right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) broke 11 years of silence to intervene in the debate. I was elected at the same time as the right hon. Gentleman, although I have not as yet had the pleasure of listening to him often. I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman and assure him that the Elders IXL takeover bid for Allied-Lyons is currently being examined by Ministers and the points that he made will be carefully considered.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) wound up for the Opposition. Before plunging into the general, I will deal with one particular. I have taken on board his point about the Silentnight dispute and will look into it. As he knows, both parties to that dispute have the right of access to ACAS and I believe that ACAS officials have already been involved. I will consider what the hon. Gentleman has said. Clearly, everyone wishes the dispute to be resolved to the satisfaction of the firm and its employees.

With regard to the Gracious Speech, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East touched on the one measure that will concern us both most particularly in this Session when he attacked our proposals — in the opinion of

many they are fairly modest proposals—to reform the wages councils and repeal the Truck Acts. I was amazed at the vehemence of the hon. Gentleman's opposition to those proposals. He talked about a return to Victorian values but I have never heard a more passionate and conservative—with a small "c"—defence of Edwardian England than the hon. Gentleman's comments.

That legislation was designed for entirely different economic and social conditions albeit by a good reforming Government—the Asquith Government of 1908. With regard to wage levels, both measures applied to conditions well before the modern welfare state and to a time when sweated labour conditions were more universal and a greater fear than they are today. We must consider the modern implications of retaining old legislation in all its details.

My credulity was strained to the limit by the hon. Gentleman's passionate defence of the Truck Acts and his root and branch opposition to the idea of payment by cheque in England in 1985 as a dangerous innovation. That appears to be based on his belief that someone without a bank account cannot cash a cheque. When the legislation comes forward, we can explain that to him and perhaps eliminate an argument about inhibiting personal choice.

We shall obviously address ourselves to the arguments about wages councils when the legislation is reached, but the number of wages councils have over the years been steadily reduced by successive Governments. The ones that remain raise the wages bill of some employers and reduce their competitiveness in the market. As the hon. Gentleman will know, many employers within the wages councils trades are to a large extent not affected directly on most issues, as many of them pay well above wages councils rates.

The main effects that we are seeking to reform are those resulting from the fact that some wages councils raise fringe benefits over and beyond basic rates and overtime rates and particularly from the artificial raising of the wages of younger employees. In our opinion, that sometimes raises the cost of employing younger people above the value that they can add to the business of a prospective employer, and that costs jobs.

Mr. Ashdown *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I have only a short time left. I know that the hon. Gentleman was unlucky and was not called, but I have no time to give way to him.

Within the wages councils trades, the rates of pay for younger workers in relation to rates of pay for adult workers are higher than is the norm in this country—much higher than the norm in some other equivalent economies abroad — which is why we are directing ourselves to the reforms that we have in hand.

Most of the debate was devoted to the wider issues of industry and employment. The background to the debate —which I have no time to repeat, and which I do not think I need repeat after the statement by the Chancellor, the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and my own statement—is that in what I hope is not an over-exciting way the Government are presenting encouraging economic news. We have encouraging employment figures. A number of new jobs are being created, and the number of vacancies now being notified to jobcentres is, as always, only a proportion of the total number of vacancies in the economy. The package of measures that I announced earlier today will, I hope, give more encouragement to all those involved in the vital search for jobs which concerns so many of the long-term unemployed.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox), I still reach the conclusion that employment and unemployment remain the key political and social issues. I believe that what the Government have presented today is a substantial step towards relieving that social problem.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East revealed that for obvious reasons his major concern, and that of many of his hon. Friends, is to minimise the exent of the improvement and, if it were possible, to make the problem of unemployment even worse. I was disappointed when he began with the enticing appeal, "Let us agree on the facts and let us get down to a sensible argument that helps the country." He then raced into his usual diatribe about fiddled figures. He held up a list of figures from the Library, which I suspect were right, but his interpretation of them led him on to the ever-mounting heights of 4 million to 5 million total unemployed.

We have the total of registered unemployed which the hon. Gentleman accurately quoted. That total is inflated by the hon. Gentleman and his vehement colleagues by adding the 870,000 not receiving benefit but who are seeking work. But they take no account of the 940,000 revealed by the recent labour survey who are receiving benefit but not actively looking for work. These figures are incontrovertible, but only by adding them together does one produce the figures complained about.

Even worse, the hon. Gentleman adds to his total of unemployed those on the youth training scheme when he purports to be in favour of people being encouraged to go into good quality training and in favour of the objects of the scheme. Now that training is becoming a permanent part of the preparation for work, there is no reason at all why trainees, any more than sixth formers, people in further education or others involved directly in preparation for work, should be counted as unemployed.

There is no reason blithely to take those who are working on the community programme, or who are engaged upon special measures and taking part in paid work which will improve their employment prospects, and add them to the total of those who are unwillingly idle.

It is relevant to point out that no previous Government have added those who are engaged on special measures to the unemployment figures. They are people with jobs. They are getting work experience and they are being paid for it. There is clear agreement on the figures. I cannot see the slightest point in endeavouring to add every footnote that can be found and to define people as unemployed when plainly they are not. The Government are prepared to accept that it is their duty to create conditions in which more jobs can be generated and the true figure of unemployment reduced.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East passed up the opportunity—which was seized, rather recklessly and wildly, by his right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)—to try to explain what the Opposition's response would be if they were returned to Government. The occasion of this debate upon the Gracious Speech would have been a suitable occasion to do so. They cue was given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. He said that on his recent visit to America one of the major

[Mr. Clarke]

fears that was expressed by prospective investors in this country was the possibility of the return to power of a Labour Government.

Mr. Prescott: That is not true.

Mr. Clarke: If that is not true, the hon. Gentleman should have done something to allay those fears. Outside this House he as taken the opportunity to present his proposals. They are set out in a Labour party document of which he is the author. He has done so as the Opposition Front Bench spokesman on this subject. Its title is "Planning for Full Employment". I very much doubt whether the policies contained in "Planning for Full Employment" would hold very much attraction for prospective inward investors into this country. In the preface to the document the hon. Gentleman baldly states:

"Only by a planned interventionist policy, working towards socialist objectives, can we hope to achieve a fundamental redistribution of power, wealth and jobs."

No doubt the hon. Gentleman believes, together with his right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield, that when he tried a Socialist solution it was the treaty of Rome which prevented Mr. Mitterrand from achieving a redistribution of power and creating jobs.

How will "Planning for Full Employment" or, to take the syntax literally, the redistribution of jobs, be carried out? First, the hon. Gentleman advocates, presumably as the official policy of the Opposition, more nationalisation. He says:

"Expansion of the public sector and its ownership is crucial in making industry more accountable."

Has he discussed that with his right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) who seems to express a different opinion on certain occasions? And would he discuss it with the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), who on previous occasions seemed to have difficulty in deciding how to vote on these issues? There will also be an extension of trade union control over industry.

Mr. Prescott: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is referring to just little bits of the document.

Mr. Clarke: I had trouble like this when the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) spoke about social services. When a document is produced by a Front Bench spokesman for the Labour party, I expect him to believe, as the author of that document, in what he says. The hon. Gentleman advocates:

"Labour's industrial democracy policy should give workers greater control over their own activity by extending collective bargaining from purely general issues and as images into the management and organisation of production".

The relationship between wages and jobs is entirely missed out. The repeal of all the Government's anti-trade union legislation is described in and promised by this document. A workers' rights Act is proposed. The document refers to almost everything except giving workers the right to ballot or any voice in the activities of their union. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, in his diatribes about our policies and our encouraging progress, was putting forward policies that would not only frighten the pants off American or other overseas investors but drive up the unemployment level in Britain as the Labour party sought to extend greater control over the economy.

Despite the fact that the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) was not lucky enough to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, there were contributions from the alliance, especially the right hon. Member for Hillhead. He had the opportunity to set out his reaction to the policies of the Government whom we are defending. His extraordinary speech came to no particular conclusion after his sudden confession that, for 10 years as a Labour party member, he had been a disillusioned supporter of nationalisation. He seemed surprised when we reminded him that he had voted repeatedly for it during that time. I recall that the Bill to nationalise shipbuilding was carried by one vote. Presumably it was carried by the right hon. Member for Hillhead who did not believe in what he was voting for. That puts him in a difficult position on the privatisation proposals in the Gracious Speech.

What is the position of the right hon. Member for Hillhead and, presumably, his colleagues? Now that principle has returned and they are solemnly in the centre of British politics and know what they are doing, which way will they vote? The right hon. Gentleman does not know. He said that he was going to wait for the Bill. I have never heard a greater compliment paid to the draftsmen of parliamentary documents. The policy appears reasonably clear to me. Its merits and demerits have been argued. The right hon. Member for Hillhead has gone into the opportunism of third-party politics and has made a confession of a somewhat discreditable past.

The main issue in the debate has been the balance between services and manufacturing. We have been pressed most cogently on that point by my hon. Friends the Members for Devizes (Mr. Morrison), for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), for Moorlands and for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour). I should make our position clear. In answering the House of Lords Select Committee, no Government Member is in any way seeking to dismiss or denigrate the contribution of manufacturing industry.

I do not understand how anyone can conjure anything that has been said to deny the value to an economy of a strong and competitive manufacturing industry. The shift between the proportion of people employed in service industries and the proportion of people employed in manufacturing has been a continuing trend in Britain for many years, as it has been in every equivalent developed economy. It is plainly likely to happen for a variety of reasons. It is worth pointing out, before people get shattered about our position that in 1983 manufacturing output as a proportion of GDP was exactly the same in Britain as in the United States. That is a comparison not with the state of New York, which is an extreme example, but with the whole of the United States, which is the wealthiest economy in the western world. The proportion of services as a percentage of GDP provided in the United States is as great as that provided here. The proportion of people employed in service industries in the United States is higher than the proportion employed in Britain.

When we attack the Select Committee's report, we are not dismissing the difficulties of manufacturing industry. However, the evidence chosen by that Committee was highly selective. Since the trough of the recession, manufacturing output has increased by 11 per cent., manufacturing investment by 39 per cent. and manufacturing productivity by 31 per cent. and the value of manufacturing exports is at record levels. The House of Lords Select Committee proposed solutions which no one had really supported — subsidies for manufacturing

industry, an inside track, preferential treatment for taxation and grants, compared with services. Those authors would say that. We believe that manufacturing and the rest of the economy——

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 218, Noes 354.

Division No. 2] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McCusker, Harold
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nicholson, J.
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David

Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(Worcs S)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Question accordingly negatived.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

PETITION

British Steel

10.15 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): On behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and myself, I wish to present a petition which has been given to us by our constituents and others in response to the astonishing decision taken during the parliamentary recess by British Steel to announce the closure of Gartcosh works and indeed to confirm its lack of faith in the future of Ravenscraig by refusing adequate investment in that plant.

Our constituents, the people of Scotland generally and indeed many others who see the steel industry as being essential to our manufacturing base support the petition and the cause of Gartcosh and Ravenscraig:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House do urge the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the chairman of the British Steel Corporation to reconsider the decision to close the BSC plant at Gartcosh and to make the necessary new investment to secure the long-term future of the Gartcosh-Ravenscraig complex.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Darfield Main Colliery

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

10.17 pm

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): May I express my gratitude for the opportunity to raise this matter on the Floor of the House? Although I am aware that Darfield Main colliery is the subject of the review procedure between the National Coal Board and the appropriate trade unions, there are certain aspects of which the Minister should be made aware.

Darfield Main is a mine with which I have had close associations for many years. Indeed, I was present at the negotiations when the Silkstone seam was added to the reserves of Darfield Main from Houghton Main, with assurances of at least 15 years of extended life. With the committed investment at Darfield Main of some £28 million, there opened up a potential of 1 million tonnes in the Winterbed seam where headings were already laid out. The 250,000 tonnes in the Melton Field seam took the potential life of Darfield Main to well over 20 years. However, those arguments will no doubt be put forward by the relevant trade unions in the review procedure.

Being experienced in negotiations with the NCB, I am aware of the Government's influence over the NCB. It is to that that I wish to draw the attention of the House. During the miners' dispute, which is generally accepted by political commentators as having been perpetrated on the country by the Government, I wrote to the Secretary of State about the future of Darfield Main.

Darfield Main's future lies with heavy investment in the Silkstone seam which connects to the Cortonwood reserves of the same seam. The then branch secretary of the union, Walter Swift, had written to me expressing concern about the future of Darfield Main in view of the fact, stated many times, that the NCB could not sell Cortonwood coal. We are all familiar with the history of Cortonwood.

I wrote to the Secretary of State and he passed my letter on to Mr. Ian MacGregor, chairman of the National Coal Board. I expressed concern about the future of Darfield Main and Houghton Main collieries, which mine the same seam. In response, Mr. MacGregor assured me—he was writing during the strike—that

"Darfield Main and Holton Main collieries have substantial reserves, and, unlike Cortonwood, produce coal from other seams as well as the Silkstone.

These two pits are part of the south side washery complex, centred on Grimethorpe colliery and they have benefited substantially over recent years from the board's massive programme of capital investment under plan for coal. Both pits now have a complete new underground infrastructure, with streamlined operations for men, material and mineral handling, at low cost.

The coal mined from these collieries (including that from the Silkstone seam) will form part of a comprehensive blend to produce a low cost product, suitable for both industry and power stations."

That letter was written during a different climate, but given Mr. MacGregor's assurance one can readily understand my amazement when a proposal to close Darfield Main was announced within only four or five weeks of the end of the dispute, after such a glowing reference. I am aware of the dirty tactics used by the board and the Government during the dispute, which misled

[Mr. Terry Patchett]

public opinion so gravely, but an attempt to mislead a Member of the House in such a way by the chairman of a nationalised industry is intolerable behaviour.

When I heard of the proposed closure, I immediately wrote to Mr. MacGregor requesting a meeting to discuss the matter. I was entitled to do so following the assurances that I received during the dispute. He replied by saying that his office was arranging for me to meet the area director of Barnsley area, Mr. Frank Ramsden, so that the present position could be explained, although it was Mr. MacGregor who sent the initial letter. I immediately contacted Mr. Ramsden's office by telephone. I have known Frank Ramsden personally for many years. However, his secretary told me that he was out that day and going on holiday the following day. I made that contact on my initiative—nothing came from the coal board, regardless of promises.

That happened in the middle of July. From that time to this there has been no attempt to contact me by letter or telephone. In fact, that part of the Barnsley area of the NCB no longer exists as it is now under the auspices of the north Yorkshire area director, Mr. Albert Tuke, who has not contacted me either.

I feel strongly that I have been treated with contempt by the chairman of a nationalised industry. Anyone treating a Member of the House in such a contemptuous manner is treating the House itself with contempt. I am satisfied in my own mind that Mr. MacGregor feels that he does not have to justify writing off £28 million of public money to a duly elected Member of the House. I wish to take up that line of thought with the Minister because I feel strongly that that attitude has been encouraged by the Government. The Government have been and are prepared to write off many millions, indeed billions, of pounds during the dispute, to pursue their political dogma. Had the Government been prepared to spend half as much money in creating markets for coal as they have spent in union bashing, I am sure that the NCB would be in a much sounder position today.

I also regret that the Government's arrogance has infiltrated local management. Indeed, Mr. Griffin, the manager of Houghton Main, makes repeated calls to the work force for co-operation, but that is only in public. The work force are members of the National Union of Mineworkers. Away from the public eye, Mr Griffin tells union officials that he is looking for a way to sack them —that is the branch officials, of course. What a way to run an industry.

To return to the major reason for bringing this matter to the attention of the House, I feel that the NCB is in a dilemma because the Government have no clearly defined energy policy. Is it not ironic that the coal board is turning down coking coal export orders to the tune of 2 million to 3 million tonnes to Rumania and a possible 3 million tonnes, going up to 1990, from Denmark; and I am reliably informed of Irish interests preferring British coal to American. I am speaking of coking coal which is the backbone of the Darfield Main colliery—the coking coal that the board could not sell from Cortonwood when it started this trouble.

It is to this dilemma that the Government contribute. For example, the main argument which contributed to the costly mining dispute concerned reserves. Since the strike, this has turned into a question of economics, meaning that even a pit with reserves has no guaranteed future. Darfield Main, with its 20 years' reserves, was set an economic target of £42 per tonne. It had almost achieved that aim and was suddenly told, "You cannot score goals. We are moving the net. We are dropping it to £38 per tonne." It is a ridiculous way to run a business.

I must ask the Minister to come clean on the Goverment's policy for the energy industry. It really is time that he did so. I feel confident that the Government do not have too much of an interest in the electricity generating industry for sales because of their obvious enthusiasm for nuclear energy. It seems clear that the recent reorganisation of the coal board areas is leading up to a sale of lucrative pits such as Selby and the Vale of Belvoir, with its thick seams, not necessarily with a view to competing in the electricity generating industry but with an eye to the potential market in the gas industry. It is quite well known that by the year 2010 the gas board will require as much as 100 million tonnes of coal for conversion purposes when those wasted assets in the North sea have gone, when the Goverment have done with the easy meat.

I ask the Minister, therefore, to give a direction to the board, indeed to the country, by declaring quite clearly and specifically their energy policy. It cannot be so difficult a task when we realise that 2010 is only 25 years away. Until the Minister comes clean on this, the work force will always face the dilemma of not knowing where its future lies. Like Darfield Main, many more pits will face apparently desperate searches for reasons to close them. The reasons vary from week to week. One used to be worked-out reserves. Now it is economics. This is what the coal board is now indulging in. It cannot even find a genuine reason for closing pits.

I ask the Minister to do his duty to the country by spelling out his policy honestly and clearly. We want to know how many more millions of pounds the Government are prepared to write off and how much more of the coal industry will be destroyed before the Government's targets are satisfied.

10.28 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): I acknowledge that there can be few Members of the House better qualified to speak on this subject than the hon. Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett), with his background as a craftsman at Houghton Main and as a long-standing delegate for the National Union of Mineworkers. I fully appreciate the concerns which have led him to raise this matter tonight.

Colliery closures, particularly in areas of high unemployment, must be of concern to us all. I have pointed out to the House on many occasions that the closure of individual pits is a matter for the National Coal Board in consultation with the unions. I know only too well from experience in my constituency on Merseyside the problems that are caused by high levels of unemployment. However, the hon. Gentleman has not chosen a particularly appropriate occasion to raise this matter for the first time in the House.

The area director of what was at that time the NCB's Barnsley area first proposed the closure of Darfield Main, as the hon. Gentleman knows, at a general colliery review meeting on 16 May of this year, after the strike. Under the terms of the colliery review procedure, a reconvened

colliery review meeting was held on 20 June, when the unions indicated their wish to appeal against the proposal. That appeal was heard on 7 November, last week.

As always, the NCB has assured me that it will give serious consideration to the case that has been put forward by the unions. I understand that all three major unions —the NUM, NACODS and BACM—have appealed on this occasion. The House would not want the NCB to make a quick decision on a closure which will affect about 600 of the board's employees living in or around the hon. Gentleman's constituency. I understand that a full meeting of the NCB is expected to consider the unions' appeal at a meeting on 6 December.

The hon. Gentleman made a number of allegations, of which I had no prior notice, against the NCB and its chairman—and I mean no criticism of him for that—but the specific details of assurances given by the chairman must be a matter for the hon. Gentleman to take up with the chairman direct. *[Interruption.]* Naturally, I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's remarks immediately to the attention of the chairman of the NCB, but on this matter I know that the director, Albert Tuke, has every confidence in his relationship with local Members, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman has a sufficiently good relationship with Mr. Tuke to be able to approach him direct on these crucial matters.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that for some months the NCB and the mining unions have been discussing the implementation of the modified colliery review procedure. Following a meeting on 30 October, that procedure is at last in place. Should last week's appeal prove unsuccessful, the unions will have the option to take their case to the new final stage of the procedure. For the first time, this provides an independent element in the consideration of proposed pit closures in that a panel of eminent barristers sitting alone in rotation will consider the views of both sides of the industry and make a completely impartial recommendation.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Does the Minister agree that there is evidence that since the end of the strike the pit closure programme has become more rapid than before the strike appeared to be the intention? For example, in my constituency pits such as Ackton Hall and Fryston have been closed when they were originally not on the hit list. Millions of pounds had been invested in them. Indeed, at Ackton Hall just prior to the strike a brand new office block complete with canteen as built. Is it now a case of the victor taking the spoils? In other words, will the industry be run down more quickly because one side thinks it won the strike?

Mr. Hunt: I shall be responding to that question in the context of replying to the general points that have been made.

As the question of the possible closure of Darfield Main is still only at the stage of being considered by the board, and should the appeal prove unsuccessful it has the further stage of the independent review body still before it, it would not be right or proper for me to comment in detail tonight on the pit itself. It would be wrong for me to interfere in the process that I have described. It is a matter for the mining unions to discuss with the NCB direct.

I shall, however, respond to the more general remarks about the coal industry. I start by reminding the House of our commitment to the coal industry and the massive support that we have given in the last six years, support which, despite the longest and most damaging industrial dispute the nation has ever seen, has enabled the miners to remain as some of the highest paid in the industrial pay league. That support has ensured that during the massive and long-overdue restructuring that is now taking place no man has been forced to leave the industry, and those who have chosen to leave have done so on the most extraordinarily generous terms. Government support has led to the creation of National Coal Board Enterprise Limited, which not only brings new industry into mining areas but gives men who worked in the coal mining industry a fresh start to use their redundancy money in creative and imaginative ways.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Will the Minister tell the House what the Government and the coal board are doing to follow up and develop markets for the sale of British coal? This question was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett). What are the Government and the NCB doing to win the overseas markets which many of us are convinced are available?

Mr. Hunt: When the Government came to office in 1979, Britain was a net importer of coal. In the period just before the strike we had become a net exporter of coal. That does not square with the hon. Gentleman's remarks. I am trying to avoid responding to party political points because this is not the time to rehearse the old political arguments about the strike. However, because of the politically damaging dispute, we have again become a net importer of coal. I share the hon. Member's and the House's resolve to recapture the markets for coal, but it will be impossible to do so if coal is uncompetitively priced.

Mr. Alec Woodall (Hemsworth): It is all very well for the Minister to talk about political response. Is he aware of the colliery just two miles from my home with which the Government have had many dealings? Kinsley Drift colliery has been open for only five years and is now on the hit list to be closed. That five-year-old colliery broke records when it opened, despite the fact that it began with a fatal accident in which two men were killed. It is a brand-new pit which is now on the hit list after only five years, despite the Government's commitment. What chance have the older pits that were sunk a century ago and have been working ever since if a pit that is only five years old is on the hit list because the capital charges placed on it by the Government have forced it to close for economic reasons?

Mr. Hunt: Any proposal for a pit closure must go through the review procedure. There is now every opportunity for the unions, if they wish to oppose the closure, not only to go through the old procedure stage by stage but to involve the independent element. The best place to argue about the future of a pit is within the procedures laid down in consultation with the NCB and the mining unions, not in the Chamber.

My remarks about National Coal Board Enterprise Ltd. are in no way intended to establish that the Government have an immediate answer to the problems of mining communities facing pit closures. However, it has made an impressive start. In its first year of operation, the company has created 2,700 jobs and has given direct assistance to 188 projects in the service and manufacturing industries. It has taken over disused NCB properties and created

[Mr. Hunt]

managed workshops where people are going into business for the first time. They have access to shared services and a wealth of advice and guidance on financial, administrative and marketing problems. In addition, the company is working closely with new and existing enterprise agencies, and is providing funds to the tune of £750,000 a year. Staff are being seconded to those agencies from the National Coal Board.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): How many jobs have been destroyed in the mining industry since the Tory Government took power?

Mr. Hunt: The direct answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is that the Government have no part in destroying jobs in the mining industry——

Mr. Canavan: Answer the question.

Mr. Hunt: The direct answer is that the Government have no part in destroying jobs in the mining industry.

Mr. Canavan: It is a simple question; answer it.

Mr. Hunt: The Government are in the business of providing a positive future for coal by putting record investment into establishing——

Mr. Canavan: How many jobs have been destroyed in the mining industry since the Tory Government took power?

Mr. Hunt: I am saying that the Government have destroyed no jobs in the coal industry. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a more direct answer than that. But, of course, he will never be satisfied, because it does not accord with his political views, which paint me as someone who is trying to decimate the coal industry. On the contrary, the Government have a positive attitude to the future of coal. Of course, there will be difficulties, but I believe that those difficulties can be overcome. Provided that we can regain confidence in coal, it has a tremendous future in Britain.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Cannot the answer to getting cheaper coal be found in my constituency, where week after week miners are breaking production records?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend paints the correct picture. I have been underground at six pits in the past few months, and I have discovered at the coal face a determination to make coal a competitive fuel. The hon. Member for Barnsley, East asked me about the Government's energy policy. It is simple. We are proud and fortunate to have all the main sources of energy: oil, gas, nuclear fuel and coal. Our energy policy is to keep each option active and developing, none more so than coal. There is a positive future for coal.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The Minister believes that to be a positive attitude, but why is Darfield Main to be closed when it conforms with the board's criteria on breaking even, which is that it should cost less than £39 a tonne to produce coal?

Mr. Hunt: I can readily answer the hon. Gentleman. There is no solution to unemployment in keeping open pits that cannot produce coal in a manner beneficial to the industry or to the nation. I do not prejudge Darfield Main, because its proposed closure is still going through the review procedure. It is for the coal board and the mining unions, in consultation, to determine the future of the pit. But the support of grossly uneconomic capacity has cost the taxpayer enormous sums of money in recent years. The Government refuse any longer to draw a blank cheque in support of the industry on the taxpayer. Of course, the NCB must put its house in order. To do that, and to be able to face the future as a healthy and competitive industry, it is vital that it should close capacity which cannot make a positive contribution.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): The Minister has talked many times about his concern for the unemployed in my region, with which he is closely associated, and he will be aware of the closure of mines in his constituency. What is his view of the Lancashire mines? He has argued vociferously in the House about unemployment in the area that he represents. He does he square that with the closure of mines in Lancashire?

Mr. Hunt: It is clear that the Government want a viable, economic coal industry. With the majority of investment going into existing rather than new pits, the industry has every opportunity to prove itself and individual pits have the chance to reach productivity targets.

We must not lose sight of the subject of this debate. The hon. Member for Barnsley, East cannot argue, as he conceded, that the remaining reserves at Darfield Main will be lost. I understand that they are easily accessible from the neighbouring colliery, and that all those currently employed at Darfield Main will be given the opportunity to remain in the industry if they wish, or to leave on generous redundancy terms. If there are other technical or economic arguments against closure, the proper place to air them is in the colliery review procedure.

Mr. Patchett: Is the Minister aware, when he talks about accessibility to neighbouring pits, that I have worked in the same seam and am quite familiar with it? The neighbouring seam is Houghton Main Colliery. Economic difficulties arise because of the distance men have to travel from the pit bottom to the seam. Darfield Main is closer to the pit bottom and fewer man hours are therefore required.

Mr. Hunt: I am helpless when the hon. Gentleman makes such points because, as I have acknowledged, he knows the area better than any other hon. Member. I have listened carefully to him and I am sure that what he has said will be taken into account in the procedure.

Mr. Woodall: It is all very well for the Minister to talk about a healthy, viable coal industry but is he aware that in Yorkshire alone, since the strike ended in April, 18,500 men have been made redundant? Viability is now so bad that every man at every pit in my area is talking about the future and the lid going on that pit. I can tell the Minister of a brand new pit—it is only five years old—which is now in danger under the review procedure. What about the other pits? It is all very well to talk about viability, but who decides what is viable?

The break-even point started at £42 a tonne and is now down to £38 a tonne. How long will it be before it is £36 a tonne and most pits are in danger?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman has begun to answer his own question. The viability of these pits depends upon their ability to produce coal at a competitive price. The

redundancies he has spoken about are voluntary under this Government. Often under Labour, they were compulsory. Under this Government there is an enterprise company ready to breath new life into declining areas. Under Labour, there was no enterprise company.

Mr. Lofthouse: I am sure that the Minister is not deliberately misleading the House when he speaks about redundancies under the Labour Government. I was involved in the NCB's administration of pit closures under the Labour Government, when the NCB did not make men compulsorily redundant.

Mr. Hunt *rose*——

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock on Monday evening, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at thirteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 13 November 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

YORKSHIRE WATER AUTHORITY BILL *[Money]*

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Ordered,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Yorkshire Water Authority Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of such money under section 90(6) of the Land Drainage Act 1976.—*[Mrs. Fenner.]*

TRADE

Return ordered,

of Statistics relating to Overseas Trade of the United Kingdom for the year 1986 and for each month during 1986.—*[Mr. Brittan.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Farmers and Crofters (Assistance)

1. **Sir Russell Johnston** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to assist farmers and crofters following the recent summer weather.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretay of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): Financial help will be given to the hardest hit sectors of the industry. Details are being worked out and an announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Sir Russell Johnston: Why are the Government being so slow? Does the Under-Secretary remember that his colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said at his conference on 9 October that assistance would be forthcoming soon, and he mentioned Scotland in particular, before the winter, when cash problems would be extreme? Has the Under-Secretary been in Scotland recently? If he has, he will have noticed that it is snowing. When will the help come, because small tenant farmers and crofters in particular have been savagely hit?

Mr. MacKay: I came down from Scotland only yesterday, so I am well aware ot the weather there. We have had to make a careful assessment of the position and evaluate fully the various measures that are available to deal with the problem. This has necessarily taken time, but I assure the House that the matter has been given the highest priority.

Sir Hector Monro: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind the urgency of this issue and recall that I raised it with Ministers at the end of August? Will he also bear in mind that such aid will help not only the beef sector but the many dairy farmers who have been equally badly hit? Will my hon. Friend find some way to help them as well as those in the less-favoured areas?

Mr. MacKay: I am aware of the particular problems of the dairy sector, but I think it is correct to say that the sector in most need is the livestock producers in those areas where fodder is in short supply. Buying it in will prove expensive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Does my hon. Friend accept that the fodder producers and others producing non-subsidised crops are in the greatest need? Will he assure the House that not only will there be an announcement of what measures will be taken urgently, but that the Department will ensure that help goes to farmers in greatest need rather than to sectors in greatest need and that resources are not spread too far by giving money to those who do not need it?

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend has highlighted one of the problems, which is that we must try to ensure that the money goes to those sectors of the industry that are in most need. However, it would be difficult to target in on individual farmers. We are aware of the problems, for example, in Stirling, in my hon. Friend's constituency. That sector is being considered along with others.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Is the Minister aware that already some loads of fodder have been imported from Canada? That shows the seriousness of the problem—it is not even possible to buy winter feed from the Scottish mainland. As the weather was apparent several months ago, and as Lord Gray saw the situation several weeks ago, is not this delay unacceptable?

Mr. MacKay: I am aware that hay has been imported from Canada, and that highlights the problem. It is not just a matter of cost, but of the availability of hay. There is more to the harvest problem than hay—there is also a cereal problem, which has a knock-on effect to the feeding sector. We had to wait until we saw the whole picture, and we have to consider carefully how we should set about giving help so that it goes, in the most appropriate way, to the sectors most in need.

Mr. O'Neill: Does the Minister not appreciate that when his hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) asks for public expenditure to be increased things must be in a bad way? It is not good enough for the Minister to tell the House that the matter is under consideration. Is he aware that the farmers in my constituency, who welcomed Lord Gray earlier this year, left him in no doubt of the gravity of the position and demanded quick action? The House, particularly Labour Members, knows that the farming community often cries wolf, but on this occasion the wolf is there and we have seen the devastation. Does the Minister accept that action must be taken quickly?

Mr. MacKay: As I have said, financial help will be given to the hardest hit sectors of the industry. Considerable public money is already given to agriculture. This financial year, Scottish agriculture received about £157 million in various allowances and schemes, and that is part and parcel of the Government's aid to agriculture and of public spending. Nobody on this side of the House denies that that is an important part of the Government's role in the economy.

Mr. Corrie: Is my hon. Friend aware that the worst hit area in the whole of Britain is that of our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State? Is he further aware that many farmers are selling their breeding stock to pay for the fodder that they must buy, and, therefore, are liable to lose the premium headage payments of their entire herd? Will he consider a derogation for this year because of that?

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend is right to point out those particular difficulties, and we have them in mind. We have already secured and announced a small but useful extension of the closing date for applications for the suckler cow subsidy from 30 September to 30 November this year.

Mr. Home Robertson: We welcome the promise of emergency aid for agriculture, just as we would welcome aid for other hard-pressed industries in Scotland. However, I must press the Minister on the intolerable delay in implementing that promise. Is he aware that Lord Gray said on BBC radio on 3 October that the aid package would be finalised in weeks rather than months? Is he further aware that the weeks are turning into months, and that many livestock farmers are facing a critical position now? We have had the general promise. When will we get the hard cash?

Mr. MacKay: I have made it clear that we hope to make an announcement fairly soon. I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's personal interest in the matter. One of the factors that we had to take into account was the cereal harvest, and the amount of straw that would remain after it to help with feeding. I hope that there was not too much burning of straw where the hon. Gentleman farms. I should be interested to know whether he saw straw burning, and whether he and his neighbours took a responsible view on burning straw.

Mr. Kennedy: May we take it from this afternoon's exchanges that the Minister and his Department have been shaken out of their political complacency on this issue? As hon. Members on both sides have stressed, for between a month and six weeks the upland farmers, the hill sector of livestock farming, have had great problems buying winter feedstuffs. Is he aware that the Government have driven Scottish agriculture so deeply into indebtedness that many farmers are not financially capable of handling one bad harvest? Is that not a general indictment of the Government's policies in this area?

Mr. MacKay: My right hon. and noble Friend Lord Gray, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have been well aware of the problem for some time. That is why I said that we were taking steps to work out a programme which would bring maximum help to those in greatest need. Some time ago I visited some farms in my constituency and attended markets to see what the price of livestock would be. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman is talking rubbish when he suggests that only he is concerned.

Crosshouse Hospital and Prestwick Airport (Contingency Plans)

2. **Mr. Lambie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to pay an official visit to *(a)* Crosshouse hospital and *(b)* Prestwick airport to discuss Her Majesty's Government's contingency plans for their use in time of crisis or war; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. George Younger): I have no plans to visit Crosshouse hospital or Prestwick airport for this purpose, but any contingency plans involving the use of those facilities would be the subject of appropriate consultations with the authorities concerned.

Mr. Lambie: Is the Secretary of State not ashamed that the people affected by the plans had to read about them in the *Sunday Mail*? Why have no consultations taken place between Ayrshire and Arran health board and the local authorities in the area? What contingency plans have been made for the patients in Crosshouse hospital who will be ejected from the wards when American troops take over?

Mr. Younger: I have no responsibility for what appears in the *Sunday Mail* or any other newspaper. As the hon. Gentleman will know, any plans of this sort are necessarily classified, and are never confirmed or denied, for obvious reasons. I assure him that in the event of any such contingency plans, the requirements of the home and resident population always take priority.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that Prestwick is one of the few fog-free airports in the United Kingdom? Does he accept that it is essential that it is retained so that it can be used as an emergency airport in times of hostility?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I know the wide range of uses for which Prestwick is suitable. Fortunately, the Government, in their recent review, confirmed Prestwick airport's present role, and that is being developed.

Prison Overcrowding

3. **Mr. Ewing** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on overcrowding in Scottish prisons.

Mr. John MacKay: Substantial overcrowding in Scottish prisons is currently limited to four penal establishments — Barlinnie, Edinburgh and Inverness prisons, and Longriggend remand unit. The position will remain difficult until the refurbished Greenock prison and phase II of Shotts prison are ready for occupation in March 1986 and March 1987 respectively.

Mr. Ewing: Does the Minister appreciate that overcrowding is causing great concern to Scottish prison officers, who are being asked to work in impossible conditions which apply beyond the establishments to which he referred—to Peterhead, for example? Was it not a disgrace that in the last financial year the capital budget for the prison service was underspent by the Scottish Office? Does that not illustrate the Minister's concern about this very serious problem?

Mr. MacKay: We are concerned about the problem. The fact that the projects at Greenock and Shotts are coming on stream in the medium term shows that we are and have been concerned about the problem for some time.

Mr. McQuarrie: I am sure that my hon. Friend will have listened with interest to the comment by the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) about Peterhead

prison in my constituency. Peterhead is overcrowded. Serious problems occur because long-term prisoners need more accommodation. What is happening about the building of the new prison?

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend should table a question on the subject raised in the latter part of his supplementary question. Peterhead is a problem because of the nature of the prisoners in that institution. We always want to ensure that the conditions there are such that the staff can cope with the most difficult prisoners that we have to hold in our penal institutions.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Minister believe that the provision of additional places will completely remove the overcrowding? Is he not worried that the availability of additional spaces might simply lead to further and additional incarceration sentences?

Mr. MacKay: I do not think that the judiciary considers whether the prison service has expanded before it decides on a medium-sized sentence or a long sentence. It is difficult to project into the future. My Department is considering ways of producing reliable projections to guide us in our plans.

Mrs. McCurley: In discussions will my hon. Friend pay particular attention to the regrettable conditions in which prisoners on remand are kept?

Mr. MacKay: That is one of the problems. One of the factors which has led to overcrowding is the increase in the length of time that remand prisoners are kept in custody awaiting trial. I am asking my Department to examine that problem.

Mr. Hugh Brown: If the Chancellor's statement yesterday means extra resources for the Scottish Office, will the Minister get his hands on some of them to establish more designated places?

Mr. MacKay: As the hon. Gentleman knows from experience, such matters have to be discussed by Scottish Office Ministers. I shall be putting in a plug for designated places.

Scottish TUC

4. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any immediate plans to meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the state of the Scottish economy.

Mr. Younger: I met representatives of the STUC yesterday to discuss Ravenscraig and Gartcosh. I have no other immediate plans for a meeting to discuss the Scottish economy.

Mr. McKelvey: Between now and when the Secretary of State again meets the STUC, will he reflect on the unacceptably high level of unemployment in Scotland, and its effects and pressures on social services?

Will the right hon. Gentleman explain why he has decided not to establish an inspectorate of social services in Scotland, which would have protected the most disadvantaged in our society, such as the mentally handicapped, the elderly and the young offender?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern about a genuine problem. One of the happier features of the difficult times for public expenditure during the past few years has been the increase in provision for social work and social services, precisely because a larger number of people have been unemployed.

Mr. Henderson: When my right hon. Friend meets the STUC, will he point out the benefits of a low inflation policy, which would result in increased jobs in Scotland? Indeed, does it not enable my right hon. Friend to provide more money for the assistance of essential services such as health, social work and education?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is right. Were I to have such a meeting, I would certainly mention the points to which he referred. If the STUC requested a meeting about the current Scottish economy, I should draw to its attention the fact that all the trends—with the exception of the difficult question of unemployment — are extremely good. What is more, the number of people in employment in Scotland is rising.

Mr. Roy Jenkins: Will the right hon. Gentleman allow the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to get away with his view that there is no connection between the future of Gartcosh and the future of Ravenscraig?

Mr. Younger: I am still evaluating the evidence that was presented to me by the shop stewards committee, which came to see me a few weeks ago. The matter is complex and involves digging deeply into the working methods of the industry. The current position is that the Government have secured the future of Ravenscraig; management has decided that Gartcosh must close.

Mr. Ernie Ross: When the Secretary of State next meets the STUC to discuss the economy, will he be in a position to say exactly when decisions will be made about the LEGUP scheme? In particular, will he be in a position to say when a decision is likely to be made about LEGUP assistance for the Landfall development in Dundee, on which construction, service and tourism jobs are heavily reliant?

Mr. Younger: I warmly welcome the hon. Gentleman, who I am very glad to see back in the House. The matter to which he refers is currently under consideration. It is an important proposal, and I assure him that we shall urge those concerned to reach a decision as quickly as possible.

Sir Hector Monro: In view of the Chancellor's very encouraging statement on the economy yesterday, will my right hon. Friend say how much more is being spent in real terms on health and roads in Scotland compared with the miserable amount spent by the Labour Government in 1979?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is correct in his assumption. It seems almost impossible to get people to understand the plain fact that the real growth in spending on the Health Service is about 7 per cent., even at the most pessimistic forecast. It is high time that people gave more credit where credit is due.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Secretary of State not recognise that he is almost wholly isolated on the issue of Gartcosh? Even within the Scottish Conservative party there is a great deal of growing discontent and doubt about the way that he has represented Scottish interests. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that his failure to intervene on Gartcosh is every day looking more and more like an abdication of responsibility? Will he guarantee that when he is evaluating the evidence he will do so with a genuinely

open mind? If, as we believe, it is clear that there is a connection between Ravenscraig and Gartcosh, and that Ravenscraig will be lonely and exposed if Gartcosh is closed, will he at least join the remainder of Scotland and fight to save the plant?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman knows that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I have both made it clear that if it were established that the closure of Gartcosh would lead inevitably to the closure of Ravenscraig we would have to review the position, but that is not the case. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will recall that no Labour Government ever intervened in ordinary management decisions of the nationalised industries that they set up. It would be wrong to do so. Indeed, the type of evidence presented on the matter is an eloquent testimony to the wisdom of nationalised industries being run by those appointed to run them and not being managed in detail by the Government of the day.

Polkemmet Bing

5. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his action to help the National Coal Board to alleviate the emissions to the Whitburn/Blackburn/Bathgate area from the smoking Polkemmet bing.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): The question of emissions from Polkemmet bing is a matter for the local authority to pursue with the National Coal Board.

Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate has given advice previously about the problem and is available to do so again if it is asked.

Mr. Dalyell: Are the emissions not a major environmental hazard?

Mr. Ancram: Obviously there must be concern about any emission, but in this case it is the responsibility of the district council, under the Clean Air Act 1956 to decide whether action can be taken against the owners of the mine if they fail to take all practicable means to prevent combustion and to prevent or minimise the emission of smoke and fumes.

Mr. Dickens: The emissions from the bing or tip, call it what we will, must be intolerable to local residents. Cannot the Government press the National Coal Board to remove the offensive heap? The local residents must be suffering greatly from the terrible smells.

Mr. Ancram: I am sure that both the district council and the National Coal Board will note with interest my hon. Friend's question. The district council is obtaining advice on the health aspects from the community medical specialist employed by the local health board.

Teachers' Dispute

6. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on progress made in solving the Scottish teachers' dispute.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made in the House on 22 October.

Mr. Hamilton: Since the Government are embarking on a brainwashing national exercise to persuade us that we are on the brink of a marvellous, prosperous era, does the Secretary of State not think it appropriate to allow the teachers of Scotland a share of that prosperity by setting up an independent review board? With the impending Christmas season, would it not be a nice Christmas present for parents, teachers, children and Scottish education generally if he were to concede that request?

Mr. Younger: I am glad to welcome the hon. Gentleman's conversion to the message that is being sent round from this side of the House. I have been trying hard to persuade the teachers to accept more money on any reasonable terms since December last. The tragedy is that a very large number of teachers have not yet appreciated how much the offer of extra money that I made them in August involves or could involve. I hope very much that they will pay more attention to that.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many teachers in my constituency would like a first phase interim pay settlement linked to negotiations on contracts of service?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding us that the teachers suggested when I met them in late September that that might be a way out of the dispute, but that is not a realistic proposal, amounting as it does to a request for a very large increase in pay now with nothing in return for the public. We have to remember that the public must expect to get decent value for the money that they spend on teachers.

Mr. Canavan: Is the Secretary of State aware that at the all-party meeting held last week in the House of Commons during the teachers' lobby of Parliament, the spokespersons of all parties got a fair hearing, with the exception of the Tory party spokesperson, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) who got such a belting from the teachers that I, as the neutral chairperson, had to come to his rescue to allow him to be heard? Is that not indicative of how much the Tory party is isolated and completely out of touch with the opinion of teachers, parents and the general public in Scotland? Will the Secretary of State now face up to his responsibilities and set up an independent pay review to bring about an end to the damaging dispute, which has been dragging on for well over a year?

Mr. Younger: If I were the hon. Gentleman and had been in the chair at the meeting, I would be ashamed to admit that everyone had a fair hearing except my hon. Friend. As chairman, the hon. Gentleman had an obligation to ensure that my hon. Friend had better treatment than that.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will have told his former colleagues in teaching and his constituents who are in teaching to look very hard at the offer made to them. It was an offer, over a four-year period, of extra money from the Government amounting to 10 per cent. over and above the annual increases negotiated in the normal way. There are many workers in many other industries who would be very glad to receive such an offer.

Mr. Hirst: Is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents are doubly hit by the EIS targeting of Lenzie and the primary school feeders of Kilsyth? Does he think that it is any accident that the bulk of the targeting action is directed against children who go to schools in the constituencies of Conservative Members of Parliament?

Does he agree that it is as morally indefensible as the targeting of schools in his constituency and those of his ministerial colleagues? Will my right hon. Friend remind the EIS that, since the dispute must be solved by negotiation, the best thing it can do for Scottish education is to respond to his invitation to come back and talk?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is correct. Whatever happens, the dispute is bound to end by negotiation. I do not think that anyone would disagree when I say that I have played my part in trying to get negotiations going between the parties as quickly as possible, and I again urge them to do so.

I express my deepest sympathy to my hon. Friend about the effect of targeting on schoolchildren in his constituency. Having suffered severely from targeting for most of last year, we have discovered in our area that it is extremely counter-productive, as all parents of almost all political persuasions think that it is a grossly unfair practice.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that there is real concern in Scotland among parents and teachers that he is no longer able to maintain an adequate education system? There is particular concern that he will not be able to ensure that there is proper provision for pupils not only to take examinations but to be fairly assessed and marked. Will he acknowledge that the statement he has just made and the one that he made last week at the Scottish Council are a misrepresentation of the Government's position, and that the offer he has mentioned would not even guarantee teachers a cost of living increase for the next four years?

Mr. Younger: If the hon. Gentleman, as a Member of Parliament with every access to information, thinks that that is a proper description of the offer, we are indeed in a bad position. One of the chief difficulties is that very few people seem to have bothered to find out what the offer amounts to. The hon. Gentleman's description of it is totally incorrect. The offer to the teachers was of extra Government money over four years amounting to 10 per cent. over and above the annual increases negotiated. That has no relation whatever to the de cription given by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Strang: The teachers ar perfectly aware of the offer on the table, and they have determined repeatedly that they are not willing to accept it. When will the Government recognise the determination of the teachers in the campaign and come forward with a new initiative to settle the dispute?

Mr. Younger: I am looking all the time for any way forward in the dispute. Most of the teachers' representatives would agree that great efforts have been made by the Scottish Office and themselves to find a way forward. I am in no doubt whatever that teachers feel that they are under-remunerated, under-appreciated and badly treated. That is why I have been trying since December last year to find a way of paying them more money. It is time that the vast majority of teachers responded and came to discussions to make use of the offers.

Mrs. McCurley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the teachers are in their present position because they were treated so badly under the Labour Government?

Mr. Younger: As I pointed out to the deputation last week, if the teachers are concerned about the erosion of their position since the Houghton awards, more than half of the erosion happened under the Labour Government.

Mr. Ewing: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the 10 per cent. to which he refers is 10 per cent. of the first year's salary, and not—this is the impression that he giving—10 per cent. of the third or fourth year's salary. It is very important that that should be made clear. The Secretary of State said at Gleneagles last week—and he has repeated it today—that he appreciates that the teachers are fed up and feel that their value to society is not being recognised. What will he do about that in practical terms? If he sits down and does nothing, as he has been doing over these past months, the promise and commitment that has has given on his own behalf and on behalf of the Scottish Examination Board, that the examinations next year will go ahead, will simply be incapable of fulfilment. The examinations will not go ahead unless he gets the dispute settled quickly.

Mr. Younger: No amount of fancy arithmetic alters the fact that the extra money offered from the Government is £125 million over and above the annual increases that will be negotiated year on year by the normal machinery. That is what has to be understood.

As regards the examinations, I go a long way with the hon. Gentleman in what he says. There is no doubt whatever that if the boycott by all the teachers of the examination process really does take place, while the Examination Board will do everything it can to run the examinations, such a boycott is bound to cause considerable damage to the examination system. That is an additional reason why all concerned ought to try their best to change their positions to resolve the dispute. I shall certainly do all I can to bring that about.

Rates Relief

7. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce the amount of rates relief available to domestic and commercial ratepayers in Scotland for the financial year 1986-87.

Mr. Ancram: The level of domestic rate relief in 1986-87 is one of the elements of the rate support grant settlement that I plan to discuss with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 29 November. My right hon. Friend is still considering the future level of the revaluation rate rebates, which affect both domestic and commercial ratepayers.

Mr. Kirkwood: Is the Minister now in a position to tell us what level of claims has been made in the current financial year of the £50 million earmarked? It would be an interesting figure. Could he give us an assurance that there is a commitment on the Government's part in principle to continue the scheme into next year? If that is the case, it would be necessary to give the important additional assurance that it would be financed by new money and not just by the aggregate Exchequer grant available for local authorities next year.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Member must be aware that both my right hon. Friend and I fully realise the problems facing ratepayers in Scotland, as shown in the action that we took this year in increasing domestic rate relief eightfold, from £14 million to £102 million. We also gave

relief to the domestic and commercial ratepayers who had valuations over three times. That is an indication of our concern. We shall have to consider, in the light of all the circumstances arising out of the rate support grant settlement, the level of future help to be given in these areas.

Mr. Hirst: Will my hon. Friend bear carefully in mind the substantial benefit that came to people through the revaluation rebate scheme, notwithstanding what may have been said by Opposition Members? Will he and his ministerial colleagues do all in their power to ensure that the scheme is retained until such time as we have rate reform in place?

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because I have found that the scheme that we introduced was warmly welcomed by ratepayers across Scotland, hard hit by revaluation—more warmly welcomed than it was by hon. Members on the Opposition Benches, particularly those in the Liberal party and the SDP. At the same time, it is worth remembering that the best protection for ratepayers in Scotland lies in local authorities keeping expenditure down.

Mr. Maxton: Is the Minister aware that there is already considerable anger among the ratepayers in Scotland that the full £50 million promised by the Secretary of State was not forthcoming, and that that anger will be as nothing compared to the anger among ratepayers when bills come through the postbox next year if no rate relief is given? If there is no new money forthcoming, how will he and his right hon. Friend explain this humiliating defeat in Cabinet to the Scottish conference and to the electors in next year's regional elections?

Mr. Ancram: May I take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. Member on his first appearance at the Opposition Dispatch Box, and say that on the Government side, at least, we look forward with relish to his future contributions from that position.

I listened to what the hon. Member had to say and I hope that, as he is so concerned about the interests of ratepayers and the anger that they will undoubtedly show if rate bills go up next year, he will press those local authorities that are controlled by the Labour party to keep their expenditure down and to keep rates down accordingly.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend reconsider the rebates? A rebate that does not remove the difficulties of the domestic or commercial ratepayer having his principal bill of the year multiplied by a factor of 10 times inflation is not a service to the domestic or commercial ratepayer. Unless the factor is realistic, it will have no political or economic effect.

Mr. Ancram: My hon. and learned Friend and I have discussed this matter previously. The decision to set the eligibility factor at a multiplying factor of three times was taken after very careful consideration of the proper measure of relief required to be given. I believe that my hon. and learned Friend's constituents have benefited from this. I am sure they will let him know whether they wish a scheme of this sort to continue.

Agricultural Capital Grant Schemes

8. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to revise the Agriculture Capital Grant Schemes Regulations in the light of the damage to the industry occasioned by the poor summer conditions.

Mr. John MacKay: As I have already indicated, the Government are currently considering how we can best aid those farmers most seriously affected by the bad weather. A number of options are being explored, and it would not be appropriate for me to anticipate the outcome.

Mr. Wallace: Is the Minister aware that due to the bad weather in the summer a number of drainage schemes undertaken under the former capital grants scheme might overrun the cut-off date of 31 December? Furthermore, a number of farmers will next year have to undertake reseeding as a result of the bad weather, even though they had not planned to do so, and that will limit their opportunities for future investment under the new capital grants schemes. In those circumstances, will the Minister accept that not to make any appropriate relaxation of the regulations to meet the problems would be unduly niggardly?

Mr. MacKay: I accept that this year there may have been some grant-aided activities that have proved to be less than satisfactory or, indeed, a total loss. If a farmer decides that he wishes to start afresh next year, our Department will be prepared to look sympathetically at such a proposal within the context of the new grants schemes.

Mr. McQuarrie: Although we thought that most of these farms had satisfactory drainage and liming and would not require major capital grants schemes, is my hon. Friend aware that that is no longer the case because of the severe climatic conditions in the summer? Will he therefore consider the inclusion of full money for liming and drainage grants in any future capital grants allocation?

Mr. MacKay: The new capital grants schemes that came into operation on 1 October were devised following extensive consultation, and they are designed to reflect the priorities in European Community regulation 797/85. Notwithstanding that, I am satisfied that these grants constitute a worthwhile package of assistance.

Teachers' Dispute

9. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has made to the suggestion from the organisation representing parents of children in targeted schools that an independent arbiter or conciliator be appointed to help settle the dispute in Scottish schools.

The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): My right hon. Friend met representatives of the co-ordinating committee on 24 September. Since then he has, as he told the House on 22 October, been in direct contact with the teachers' side, and the discussions that ensued have produced useful clarification of their position. For the time being, therefore, there seems little further that could be contributed by an intermediary, but we shall continue to bear the possibility in mind.

Mr. Foulkes: I am more encouraged by that response than I expected to be. As on earlier questions my hon. Friends were strongly seeking a new initiative, why has not this very good initiative been taken up? I have spoken to the Minister about this on a number of occasions, and

he will understand that a conciliator could act as a go-between, solve this damaging dispute and do so perhaps within one or two weeks. We are not talking about bringing in a wise man — an arbiter — to decide something that the Secretary of State is unable to implement, because the Secretary of State has ruled that out. We are talking about a conciliator. Why has that been turned down? As the Under-Secretary has indicated that this has not been ruled out for the time being, will he say when he might make a substantive decision about the suggestion?

Mr. Stewart: Technical discussions, not negotiations, are continuing with the teachers' representatives. It is not, therefore, appropriate to introduce an intermediary, but we shall continue to bear that possibility in mind.

Mr. Malone: Does my hon. Friend agree that while conciliation may sound fine in principle, each initiative that has been taken by him and his right hon. Friend has been met by increased targeting by the teachers? Does not this show that, at least until now, the teachers have been more keen to exercise political muscle than to conciliate?

Mr. Stewart: I agree with my hon. Friend that targeting is not only unjust, discriminatory and counter-productive, but that it will not lead to a resolution of the dispute. The dispute can be resolved only by reasoned negotiation.

Mr. Buchan: The resolution of the dispute has been held up because of the Government's refusal to accept an independent pay review, presumably on the ground that it might lead to an increase in public expenditure. In view of the highly publicised declaration in the last few days of the Government's new-found love of high public expenditure, will they now give evidence of their belief in it by granting an independent pay review?

Mr. Stewart: As the Government have made clear on numerous occasions, pay cannot be considered in isolation from the duties for which teachers are paid. That is the position, not only of the Government, but of the employers, the Labour-led management. The hon. Gentleman referred to public expenditure. As my right hon. Friend told the House earlier, he is prepared to permit an extra £125 million to be used over four years to finance the kind of pay and conditions package that has been suggested by the management.

Mr. Henderson: Is it not the case that virtually everybody who is concerned about this disastrous dispute has put forward proposals for breaking the deadlock, except the EIS? Is my hon. Friend confident that if he accepted the proposal of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) it would be met with any greater response from the EIS than the hon. Gentleman's very sensible proposal in February of this year?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is right. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) will recognise that he obtained a more reasoned response to that suggestion from the Government than he obtained from the EIS.

Mr. Douglas: Does the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State accept that during this period there has been a hardening of the teachers' attitude because they feel so disadvantaged? How long does he expect the dispute to continue, to the damage of the educational prospects of all schoolchildren in Scotland? When will he take resolute steps to halt the dispute and acknowledge that the teachers are disadvantaged? When will he take steps to obtain an independent view of that, even for himself?

Mr. Stewart: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has been listening to what my right hon. Friend and I have said. Of course this is a very damaging dispute. Some of the tactics used by the EIS are without precedent. The Government recognise the concerns of teachers. That is why they have consistently said that they would be prepared to make extra resources available to finance a sensible pay and conditions package.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that the real problem is that the teachers' leaders do not have confidence in their own ability to reach a negotiated settlement on factors that suit them admirably? There is money on the table, and changes in conditions have been proposed that would enhance their pay in many areas. They are in a unique position. If they were in a position to exploit it, as would any sensible trade union leader, they would do so, instead of calling for this nonsense of an independent review of pay alone.

Mr. Stewart: As my hon. Friend rightly points out, the kind of package that has been suggested would have great advantages for the teaching profession.

Rating Reform

10. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to announce the timetable for and scope of the reform of the Scottish rating system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: We are looking carefully at the whole system of local government finance, including rating. A consultative document setting out the Government's proposals will be published at around the turn of the year.

Mr. Marshall: Is the Minister aware that his answer does nothing to stop the further disenchantment with his party in Scotland, nor the feeling of betrayal at the absence of any mention of rating reform in the Queen's Speech? Will the hon. Gentleman come clean and tell us that he has absolutely no idea what to do about rating reform—this year, next year, sometime, never?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman should not be so hopeful. We realise that it is not in the interests of the Labour party that there should be reform of the rating system, which suits the overspending authorities controlled by Labour. Had there been an announcement about legislation on rating in the Queen's Speech before the production of the Green Paper, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would have been the first to criticise us for doing so.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Crown Immunity

37. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland on how many occasions in each of the last six years he has been obliged to discontinue prosecution proceedings on the grounds that Crown immunity is involved.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): I know of no such case. Criminal proceedings should not be instituted in the first place if Crown immunity is a bar to prosecution.

Mr. Canavan: In view of the statement yesterday by the Minister for Health that the Government were giving further consideration to Crown immunity in hospitals—whereby hospital authorities cannot be prosecuted if, for example, their kitchens fall below statutory standards of hygiene—will the Solicitor-General give a commitment that abolition of Crown immunity will be extended to Scotland? Why should the Secretary of State not be prosecuted if he fails to give hospitals enough resources and puts patients at risk by failing to keep the hospitals up to statutory standards?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The matter of Crown immunity is of United Kingdom application. As the hon. Gentleman rightly says, yesterday my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health said that he was considering the matter in respect of food hygiene regulations. If any change were to come out of that, prosecution would have to be considered, but first, we have to wait for what comes out of the review.

Mr. Forsyth: Does my hon. and learned Friend accept that this is a serious problem, because not only are hospital catering departments protected from competition, but they are now protected from action against them when they fall down because of incompetence?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I can only repeat that the matter of Crown immunity is there, and it covers hospitals. There can be no doubt about that. It is essentially a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. There has already been a clear sign that the matter is under review.

Mr. Kennedy: Will the Solicitor-General be directly involved in the review that he mentioned? Given that today all-party delegations have been to see his right hon. Friend the Minister for Health south of the border, have the Scottish Office or his Department had any input into the considerations thus far?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: On the latter point, the hon. Gentleman will have to ask that question of the Secretary of State for Scotland. He will appreciate that the review is a matter for the Department of Health and Social Security to consider. As I have said, the issue of Crown immunity is of fundamental constitutional importance, and I anticipate that, if it were breached, there would be a wide-ranging review.

Mr. Ewing: Will the Solicitor-General clear up the implication of the question asked by his hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth)? Would a private contractor operating in a National Health Service hospital kitchen be subject to prosecution if the kitchen was unclean?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The situation is this. Even a number of employees within the NHS could be subject to prosecution if they were in breach of regulations. The position of private contractors is different. From what the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) said, I understand that the point of greatest concern is what happens now, when there are no private contractors and the catering work is undertaken by the health board itself.

Coal Industry Dispute

38. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many policemen were prosecuted for alleged offences during the miners' dispute.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: None, Sir.

Mr. Brown: Does not the Solicitor-General's answer show that the dispute in Scotland was a relatively peaceful affair? Can the hon. and learned Gentleman explain why more than 200 miners have been dismissed by management and why very few of them have been reinstated? What do the Government intend to do about that.?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I must tell the hon. Gentleman once again that reinstatement is a matter for the Coal Board, not for me. Failing satisfactory resolution, it is a matter for an industrial tribunal. The hon. Gentleman described the dispute as relatively peaceful. I have told him before that about 1,000 people were prosecuted for incidents and that 721 of them were convicted. That is a fairly clear indication of our assessment of a peaceful dispute.

Mr. Hirst: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that his answer confirms that the conduct of the police during the miners' strike was exemplary? Does he deplore the fact that Labour-controlled Strathclyde regional council has persistently refused since the dispute to bring police numbers up to establishment?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: My hon. Friend is right. I do not know how it is supposed that the rule of law can be enforced in Strathclyde when the police are not up to establishment. My best information is that there have been just 14 complaints against the police arising from the miners' dispute. As more than 1,000 people were prosecuted, it appears that the police behaved excellently.

Correspondence

39. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland when the hon. Member for Fife, Central can expect a reply to his recent letter concerning the death of one of his constituents as a result of a car accident involving a drunken driver.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I replied to the hon. Gentleman on 11 November.

Mr. Hamilton: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the driver, Mr. Sharp of Glasgow, pleaded guilty to two serious charges—careless driving under the influence of drink and causing death by such driving? Does he further agree that Mr. Sharp had a previous conviction for drunken driving and that he had more than three times the limit of alcohol in his blood, and yet Sheriff MacArthur, in the Kirkcaldy court, sentenced him to 240 hours of community service and suspended his licence for five years? Is that not a travesty of justice? Does he agree that the sentence might have been different if someone generally considered more important than my 69-year-old constituent had been killed? Her husband has been damaged for life and his nose was very nearly torn off. Is that not a disgrace and a tragedy for Scottish justice? What can be done?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: As far as I can ascertain, the hon. Gentleman's factual narrative is correct

in every detail. Whatever view he may have of the sentence imposed by the court—it is clear that there are reservations about it on both sides of the House—he will appreciate that, in Scotland, the Crown, as prosecutor has traditionally stood apart from sentencing policy. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would want us to maintain that distinction in our legal system. When an attempt was made this side of the border to allow the Crown to take an appeal against too lenient a sentence, I understand that the hon. Gentleman's party felt that it was a thoroughly undesirable development.

Mr. Hamilton: In view of the great importance of this matter, I give notice that I shall raise this matter on the Adjournment at the earliest possible opportunity.

Productions (Pre-trial Release)

40. **Dr. Godman** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will discuss with procurators fiscal arrangements for the release of productions before trials.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am satisfied that procurators fiscal are adequately instructed on this matter.

Dr. Godman: This is an urgent and critical matter, especially for people on low incomes who have had articles stolen and, in the event of the criminals being apprehended, must wait a long time for the restoration of their goods. Will the Solicitor-General re-examine the rules of evidence so that there might be an early release of productions?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The hon. Gentleman has identified what we also recognise is a problem. In the interest of fair trials, however, there are evidential requirements with regard to the production of items that have been stolen. Instructions have been given to procurators fiscal throughout Scotland that, if possible, they should return productions to their owners. For example, if an old-age pensioner has had a television set stolen, it should be returned. If that is to be done, however, it may be necessary to secure an undertaking from the person involved that, in the event of a trial and the need to produce the item, it will be returned to the court. If the hon. Gentleman has any particular case in mind, I hope that he will write to me.

Mr. Fairbairn: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that this is a major problem in Scotland and gives rise to enormous embarrassment? For instance, a friend of mine had his plumber's gear stolen from his car. Frequently in Scottish courts we have a label in place of the production, which is not required to be brought. If my hon. and learned Friend goes to any production room, especially in Glasgow, he will see a myriad productions which matter greatly to their owners but have no evidential value at all. Surely we could have minutes of agreement between the defence and the prosecution for the return of items which are of immense value to their owners but of practically no evidential value to the court.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. He sets out a solution which I strongly urge should be followed. In as many cases as possible minutes of admissions or minutes of agreements should be entered into. There is, however, a problem at an earlier stage, as it may take some time before the matter comes to court. In those circumstances, procurators fiscal have now been enjoined to consider the matter carefully and to return items to their owners if possible.

Points of Order

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

3.30 pm

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take only points of order concerned with Scottish Question Time.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We reached question No. 4, which was identical to my question No. 26. Has the practice of linking questions ceased? Furthermore, are not Members who take the trouble to put questions on the Order Paper at a grave disadvantage when Tory Members are called as many as three times and we are not even noticed?

Mr. Speaker: I am very conscious of what the hon. Gentleman has said. He is quite right—I do my utmost to link questions, but I cannot do it on every occasion. If the hon. Gentleman studies the Order Paper—I am very conscious of this — he will see that only five hon. Members who had put down questions were not called. Moreover, if the hon. Gentleman studies *Hansard* I think that he will find that Opposition Members were called many more times than Conservative Back Benchers.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take points of order about yesterday later, at the usual point in our proceedings.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: I think that the same goes for the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman), who has given me notice of his point of order.

Mr. Ryman: My point of order relates to the statement expected shortly.

Mr. Speaker: I will certainly not take that now.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): On a point of order arising out of Scottish questions, Mr. Speaker. In relation to question No. 39, the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) made an implicit criticism of a member of the Scottish judiciary in claiming that his sentence and judgment were inappropriate. Is it not a habit of this House that no criticism of the judiciary may be made?

Mr. Speaker: As I understand it, the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) was criticising the sentence and not the judge.

Mr. Donald Stewart: On a point of order in connection with the private notice question that is about to be raised——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot anticipate what the answer to that will be.

TSB (Scotland) Sale (Judgment)

3.33 pm

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill) *[by private notice]* asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the consequences of the ruling by a Scottish judge yesterday that the assets of the TSB (Scotland) belong to the depositors and what course of action the Treasury intends to take on the matter.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): We are now carefully but urgently considering Lord Davidson's judgment and opinion, which have only just become available and raise complex legal issues. The Trustee Savings Banks Bill, now the Trustee Savings Banks Act 1985, would not have been presented to the House if the Government had not received firm legal advice, which was reflected in last December's White Paper. It remains the Government's expectation that we shall wish to lodge formal notice of appeal as soon as practicable.

Mr. Craigen: May I take it from the Minister's reply that the Government now regret having embarked on this legislation, supposedly as honest brokers for the TSB central board? Does the Minister accept that he now has a duty to tell the TSB to take no further action about the flotation of the sale until the outcome of any pending appeal is known? Finally, how far are the Government prepared to go with taxpayers' money over litigation? Is this matter to be taken as high as the House of Lords? What does the Minister think about the relative sparsity of Scottish Law Lords in that formidable body?

Mr. Stewart: After the recent remarks about the Scottish judiciary, I hesitate to enter further into that field. The hon. Gentleman asked about the actions of the TSB. Clearly, the TSB will have to take into account the current judgment and anything further which transpires in the course of this case. I should like to clear up one misapprehension that was expressed about the decision announced yesterday. The Government have never planned to receive any of the proceeds of a flotation of the TSBs. It has no impact on the privatisation programme and will not be a sale of Government-owned assets. It is a matter for the TSB and no doubt it will consider the implications most carefully.

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): In view of the onus on the Government to encourage best practice in financial regulations, not least in City affairs, would it not be better if the Government, while the appeal is pending, were to ask the TSB to cease advertising the prospectus —or at least the fact that the offer is about to be made?

Mr. Stewart: I am sure the TSB will take note of what my hon. Friend has said. It is not for me to instruct the TSB what to do. I am sure it is aware of the sensitivities and the implications involved.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Has the Minister taken on board the fact that Lord Davidson stressed the mutual nature of the society and the consequent rights of depositors? All the questions to the Minister so far have stressed that it would be quite improper, pending an appeal, for any prospectus of the sale of the assets to be issued. In view of that, can the Government exercise an influence to ensure that this will not happen?

Mr. Stewart: As I understand it, Lord Davidson did not say that the depositors were members of the banks. Nevertheless, he said that in his view ownership was vested in the depositors. Clearly, the opinion itself raises complex legal issues that we will have to consider most carefully. I do not imagine that the TSB will want to make any hasty judgment or move on that, particularly with regard to flotation, which is not imminent in the immediate future anyway.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I declare an interest; I am a depositor. [HON. MEMBERS: "How much?"] I still have 1s 11d in the Haymarket Savings Bank. Can the Minister assist me in the following matter? My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that the Government will heed the opinion of the Scottish courts. I do not quite know what is meant by the Scottish courts. Although the House of Lords is the last court of redress in a civil action, I am sure the Minister will appreciate that in the House of Lords there are only two Scottish Law Lords, one of whom is the Lord Advocate, who presumably gave the advice that the TSB did not belong to depositors, and the other of whom is a depositor. Is the House of Lords considered to be a Scottish court? If it is, what are the Government going to do about that little difficulty?

Mr. Stewart: We certainly have not reached that stage. My hon. Friend will recall that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reminded the House yesterday that the Government have a right to all the legal remedies available. But if, as we would expect, the Government proceed with an appeal, it will go to the Inner House, which is the Scottish Court of Appeal, and not at that stage to the House of Lords.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): Is not the effect of Lord Davidson's judgment that, if the Act is proceeded with, this will be a case of privatisation without compensation? In view of the extremely arrogant reaction of the TSB, which says that it will proceed regardless of the court judgment, will the Minister make it clear to the TSB that there can be no question of its trying to go ahead as though the court judgment had not been made? Will he give us an assurance that the Government will not name a vesting day until the legal position has been clarified?

Mr. Stewart: I appreciate the point which the right hon. Gentleman makes. During the passage of the Bill, I made it clear several times that, although the flotation was a matter for the TSBs, before then the Government had to vest the assets and name a vesting day under the Act. We have no intention of doing so in the near future.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is it not flouting the law to allow the TSB to go ahead? Will the Minister asnwer the question that was put to him, first, by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) and, secondly, by my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan)?

Mr. Stewart: It is for the TSBs to prepare for any aspect of their future, whether that be reorganisation of their internal company structure or preparations for a flotation which they hope will take place. I have already told the House that the Government are required to name a vesting day before that happens. I also said that vesting will not occur in the near future. It depends upon a range of matters quite apart from the legal aspect. At this stage, vesting is not at issue, but the Government will take into account any judgements of the court as well as undertakings from the TSBs before they consider vesting.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Since the hon. Gentleman is a Treasury Minister, may I ask him why the Treasury told the media yesterday that an appeal would be lodged, while the Prime Minister was busy telling me and the House that the Government wished to read and reflect upon the judgment?

Mr. Stewart: I will explain that point to the right hon. Gentleman. The way in which he has raised the matter is slightly misleading, although I am sure he did not mean it to be so. What happened was that, at the close of the hearing, counsel for the Treasury said that it would expect to appeal. That is the normal courtesy at the end of a hearing. It is not the same as lodging a formal notice of appeal. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said yesterday that we wished carefully to consider the judgment, which is what we are doing and will do. We have not yet drawn up a formal notice of appeal. The comments made expressed our expectation that we would appeal, but no press statement such as the right hon. Gentleman describes was made.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Is it not strange to hear Labour Members of Parliament advising the Government to obey the judgment of the courts when only a few months ago, during the miners' strike, they were not at all sure whether they should support the courts?

Mr. Stewart: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Can the Minister clarify what he is saying about the vesting day procedure and the possible tabling of an order? Did he not say this afternoon that the legal judgment and a possible appeal by the Treasury will not be the only factors taken into account when the Government decide whether to name a vesting day? Does that not show, despite his apparent reverence for the Scottish legal system, a considerable irreverence for the law and the judgment—it is not an opinion, as he described it this afternoon—that was given in Edinburgh yesterday?

Mr. Stewart: No, Sir. With respect to the hon. Gentleman, it does not suggest that. I said in July that we would consider our subsequent action in the light of any judgment. I am happy to re-emphasise that today. I did not say that the Government would disregard the judgments of the Scottish court in favour of other considerations. I said only that considerations other than the legal ones have not been resolved, and that we are nowhere near the stage when it would be appropriate to vest. The question of immediate vesting has not yet arisen.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): Is it not the case that the Government should never have gone ahead with the sale without determining the ownership of the TSB? Is not the hon. Gentleman aware that, during the passage of the Bill, the Labour party raised the ownership point time and again? Should not the Government have tested this in the courts first? What has changed since Conservative spokesmen said in the House seven years ago that the TSB was part of the mutual banking sector? What new advice has the hon. Gentleman had since then?

Is not this flotation the equivalent of the housekeeper selling off the family silver without checking whether the

[Dr. Oonagh McDonald]

family owned it? Is it not a fact that the Government are now so eager to privatise anything in sight that they will even privatise businesses that do not belong to them?

Will the hon. Gentleman make the position on the flotation clear? The *Financial Times* reported today:

"the Government intends to press ahead with the flotation of the TSB in February regardless of yesterday's setback in the Scottish courts."

Will the hon. Gentleman make it clear that the Government will not take the action before vesting that they need to take to allow the flotation to go ahead? Will he also make it clear that the Government will await the final decision of the courts before doing anything that would facilitate the flotation?

Is it not clear — *[Interruption]* — that this is yet another embarrassment for the Government, as a result of which the courts have had to step in to protect the small man against the actions of this Tory Government?

Mr. Stewart: It is a great pity that the hon. Lady prepared her questions before she listened to my answers to the questions asked of me today. Even if she believes everything that she reads in the press, she should perhaps consider what is said in the House by Ministers before she puts too much weight on the press reports.

I began by saying that the Government were not pressing ahead with these matters. If certain newspapers say so, that is their responsibility, not mine. The Government are not placing any pressure or responsibility on the TSBs to proceed—that is a matter for them. I have said, and I shall repeat, that before any action is taken by the Government, we shall take full account of any decision by the courts as well as many other matters, including not only the points that I have already mentioned but the fact of what is potentially within the scope of the existing Trustee Savings Banks Act.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I think that the right hon. Gentleman's point of order refers to this matter, in which case I shall take it.

Mr. Stewart: Yesterday, when the issue of the TSB was even more immediate and relevant than it is today, my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) applied for a private notice question today——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman knows the conventions about these matters. The names of those who have applied for a private notice question are never mentioned in the Chamber.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does this arise from the private notice question?

Mr. Ryman: Yes, Sir. I tried to raise this matter earlier on, but you overruled me, Mr. Speaker. In my respectful submission, you have allowed a flagrant breach of the sub judice rule to take place in allowing this matter to be discussed when the Government have announced, both formally and informally, that an appeal is pending from this decision. May I refer you——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I can help the hon. Gentleman immediately; I understand that the Government have not given formal notice of appeal. Such points of order take up time.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): My hon. Friend has brought his books.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the House would be interested to hear the legal position.

Mr. Ryman: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have not heard my submission, so how can you possibly rule on it?

Mr. Speaker: I distinctly heard the hon. Gentleman say that the matter was sub judice. I am saying that it is not.

Mr. Ryman: Will you hear me, Sir? There is a point which would be of interest to the House generally, and on which your guidance is sought. The rule is set out clearly on page 429 of *Erskine May* and I am sure that you know it by heart. It states clearly that if a notice of appeal is given, the matter is sub judice. A notice of appeal being given does not simply mean that the notice is filed with the court; it can be done in one of three ways: by notice to the court in a document, by the leave of the judge who delivered the original verdict, or by asking leave of the Scottish equivalent of the Court of Appeal. From the Minister's statement and answers, I understand that the Government are considering an appeal to the Scottish equivalent of the Court of Appeal. From the realities, not the technicalities of the matter — judges look at the realities now, not the technicalities—it is common sense that an appeal is about to be lodged. If so—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must stop the hon. Gentleman, because he is confounding his case. He may be right in saying that an appeal is about to be lodged, but the point is that it has not been lodged, and the matter is not sub judice. That is enough of that.

Breweries Merger (Report)

3.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Howard): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on Scottish and Newcastle Breweries and Matthew Brown which was published on 12 November. The Commission has concluded that, while the merger could not be expected materially to benefit the public interest, there are not sufficient grounds for concluding that the proposed merger may be expected to operate against the public interest. In the absence of an adverse public interest finding by the Commission, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has no powers under the Fair Trading Act 1973 to intervene to prevent that merger, or to impose any conditions on it.

Following press reports at the end of last week, it has been suggested that there may have been a leak of confidential information in advance of the report's publication. An investigation is under way to establish whether there has been a leak.

My attention has been drawn to the existence of a letter from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, about which he has written to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). That, together with all other material which may be relevant, will be considered in the context of the investigation.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): Is the Minister aware that this is an extremely serious matter because it reflects on the capacity of the Government and agencies responsible to them to hold commercially confidential information until the appropriate time for a public announcement? In those circumstances should not the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who is responsible for the whole Department have come to the House to make the statement, instead of a relatively recently appointed junior Minister?

Is the Minister aware that it is a little more serious than information "perhaps" having been leaked? It is well known that on 8 November, some days before the public announcement was made, newspapers carried stories predicting, not what the result of the Commission might be, but the result in terms which showed clearly that they knew the contents of the report, particularly the recommendation to which reference has been made.

Is the Minister further aware that there was a significant movement of shares, whereby the shares of the company in question moved from 478p to 520p—an increase of 42p—on the information being made available fairly widely through the press? As a result of that, is it not clear that an investigation in considerable depth should be held—I welcome the fact that an investigation is being undertaken—with a full disclosure of what it reveals? Will the Minister guarantee that that will be done?

Furthermore, should not the Government consider whether Ministers and officials, whether of Departments or agencies responsible to them, fully understand the important rules which exist about commercial confidentiality, and should they not take urgent steps to ensure that if those rules are understood, they are also enforced? It is disgraceful that a Government are unable to hold commercially confidential information as they are expected to. If they cannot do so, they are breaching an important trust to the British people.

Mr. Howard: It is of course a serious matter, and a serious investigation will take place. Of course that investigation will be in depth, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman suggests. All the matters to which he has referred will be carefully and fully investigated in that inquiry. It has not, however, been the practice of this or previous Governments to publish reports of internal inquiries and I therefore cannot give him the guarantee of publication which he requests.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is not the most remarkable aspect of this affair the letter which the Minister sent to me yesterday in which he said:

"Although Matthew Brown have no present intention of closing the Carlisle and Workington breweries, the jobs there could not be regarded as totally secure in the longer term even if Matthew Brown were to remain independent."

Is the Minister aware that that is simply not true? I have correspondence in my possession from Matthew Brown giving me almost indefinite assurances about the future of the brewery in my constituency.

Since Matthew Brown made £7 million profit last year, until the takeover was approved by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, the brewery at Workington was as safe as the Bank of England and the hundreds of jobs directly and indirectly dependent on that industry were absolutely secure.

Is it not clear that the Minister himself has given the green light to Scottish and Newcastle to close my brewery? He is encouraging Scottish and Newcastle to take that decision. Should he not resign because he has acted irresponsibly?

Finally, may we have an assurance from the Secretary of State for Scotland who leaked—and it was his leak which led to speculation on the Stock Exchange and the rise of 50p in the price of these shares, whereby City slickers have lined their pockets? It is for him, too, to resign. He has offended the House, he has undermined the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and he has done a disservice to the company Matthew Brown which has made an honourable contribution historically to my constituency.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and the Border): Mr. Speaker, on a more reasonable note may I ask my hon. and learned Friend——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Answer.

Mr. Speaker: I must say to the hon. Gentleman that the question was a bit long so I was taken in myself. I apologise and call the Minister to answer.

Mr. Howard: In the letter which I wrote to the hon. Member for Workington, I did not express any personal views, but I recited the conclusions reached by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. That report has been published and is available for all to see. I invite those who wish to test the hon. Gentleman's wild allegations to refer to that report.

Mr. Maclean: May I say in all reasonableness that many of my constituents believe that the conclusions by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission are at variance with the evidence presented to it? In view of the inquiry that my hon. and learned Friend announced today, does he

[Mr. Maclean]

agree that it is better to put the whole matter on ice and to have a fresh submission to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

Mr. Howard: No, Sir. The commission's report is available and I do not wish to make any further comment on it.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Will the Minister explain why he skated so gingerly over the letter which the Secretary of State for Scotland wrote to a member of the public in Leyland, Lancashire, last Friday, four days before the publication of the report, in which he disclosed the contents of the Commission's report and the Government's decision upon it? I do not impugn the integrity or the honour of the Secretary of State, but does not the fact that he sent that letter disclose a degree of incompetence and carelessness within the Scottish Office and the Department of Trade and Industry which is unacceptable when handling market-sensitive information?

May I press the Minister on the nature of the investigation and its publication? There have been few examples of market-sensitive information being leaked, but when that has happened it has sometimes led to a full tribunal. Therefore, the precedents for the widest possible inquiry, including into share profiteering, are very good. I urge the hon. and learned Gentleman to ensure that the investigation is wide and that its results are published.

Mr. Howard: The letter to which the hon. Gentleman referred will be considered in the investigation. It will be a thorough one, and as wide as is necessary to discover the facts. Unlike the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), I would not wish today to prejudge or anticipate the results of that inquiry.

Mr. Ron Lewis (Carlisle): Is the Minister aware that there is very strong opposition in Cumbria, among all the political groups, to the decision to allow a takeover? Cumbria's unemployment problem is grim, and despite everything that the Minister has said today we expect that in less than two years the breweries will be closed. Will he stand on the sidelines and act as Pontius Pilate, or will he do something about it?

Mr. Howard: All those matters were drawn to the attention of the commission, which is an independent body. As I said at the outset, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has no power to intervene to prevent a proposed merger under the Act in the light of the conclusion of the commission in its report.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): While I warmly welcome the internal inquiry that will look into the unfortunate leak, may I support the request made by my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and the Border (Mr. Maclean), bearing in mind the mass speculation from which many people—nothing to do with the brewery, but the city slickers described, quite rightly, by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours)—have made a great deal of money?

Will my hon. and learned Friend consider setting aside the conclusion in the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, and ask it to consider the matter again? Will he bear in mind the fact that many Conservative Members are deeply unhappy about and strongly opposed to a decision that will undoubtedly wipe out an important private brewery in the north-west of England?

Mr. Howard: I recognise the unhappiness to which my hon. Friend referred. However, the legislation pursuant to which the commission operates has been in existence for some considerable time, under Government of all political complexions. In this instance, it has been operated in the usual scrupulous manner, with all the procedures being properly followed. The Secretary of State has no power to intervene, for the reasons that I have given.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Minister recognise that, now that the finger of suspicion has been pointed at a Cabinet Minister, a number of public authorities and civil servants, it would be wholly inappropriate merely to conduct an internal inquiry, however wide-ranging? Is it not now necessary to ensure that a completely objective inquiry is conducted, by someone outside the public service?

Mr. Howard: No, I do not accept for one moment that a thorough internal investigation will not be objective. It will identify and ascertain all relevant facts relating to the matter.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that there is widespread concern that smaller breweries are being swallowed by larger breweries, a process which may not be in the public interest?

If the Government do not have powers to overrule the decision of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, will my hon. and learned Friend seriously consider taking powers to give the Government of the day some right to take action if, in the political of social interest, it is thought necessary to do so?

Mr. Howard: I do not think that it would be wise to consider that aspect of the matter in the light of one case. However, it is my right hon. and learned Friend's intention to review competition policy generally next year. These matters will be taken into account in the context of that review.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Minister aware that the mass of the public will view this matter as one where a Minister has managed to tip off certain favoured people with information to which the remainder of the population is not privy? [HON. MEMBERS: "Disgraceful."] As a result, will not many people make a financial killing? The Minister then comes to the Dispatch Box and blithely says that, instead of a proper public inquiry, the matter will be dealt with either by self-regulation or an internal inquiry.

I put it to the Minister that, if someone in a betting shop had managed to land a big coup on the basis of backing a string of winners after they had passed the post, that would be a matter for the Attorney-General, the fraud squad and all the rest. Why does that not apply also to people in the City?

Mr. Howard: The investigation into the facts of the matter will be thorough. I have nothing to add to what I have already said.

Mr. Piers Merchant (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that, despite the views of some hon. Members, there are areas in which the findings of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will

be welcome? They include Newcastle, where people have wide experience of the Scottish and Newcastle operation and are aware that its reputation and expertise will enable it to run Matthew Brown efficiently and effectively.

Mr. Howard: I note what my hon. Friend said. No doubt many representations to that effect were put before the commission.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): I wonder whether I could ask the Minister to give a sensible reply to my question? Although it is true that the Secretary of State cannot interfere with the recommendation of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the Secretary of State is under no obligation to accept that recommendation? He can accept or reject it.

Mr. Howard: No, the hon. Gentleman has not accurately summarised the effect of the legislation or the powers of my right hon. and learned Friend. Where the commission concludes that a merger is not likely to be against the public interest, my right hon. and learned Friend has no power under the Act to prevent it from taking place.

Anglo-Irish Talks

4.8 pm

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you can tell the House if you have had a request from the Prime Minister, or any other Minister, to make a statement to the House today about the outcome of the Anglo-Irish talks? I ask because the Dublin newspapers this morning gave the precise details of the agreement—in particular, the front page of the *Irish Press*, the mouthpiece of the party led by Charles Haughey, one-time paymaster of the Provisional IRA.

Is it not deplorable that hon. Members, who have been systematically and deliberately kept in the dark about the outcome of the talks, should learn of the conclusions from a newspaper published in Dublin? Is it not despicable that hon. Members from Northern Ireland should learn of their betrayal and the diminution of their citizenship from a newspaper published in Dublin?

Mr. Speaker: I do not read the *Irish Press*. I have no knowledge of this matter.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We entirely accept what you said about acting on the basis of press reports. Are you aware that the Irish Government intend to circulate the full text of the agreement tomorrow morning? Is it not intolerable that this House will be kept in the dark until at least next week? Is it not possible for the Leader of the House to arrange that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland makes a full and comprehensive statement tomorrow when he answers Northern Ireland questions?

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the House is present and I am sure that he will have heard that question.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 29 NOVEMBER

Members successful in the ballot were:

Dr. Norman A. Godman
Mr. Andrew Rowe
Mr. Terence Higgins

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[SIXTH DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [6 November],

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament—*[Sir Reginald Eyre].*—

Question again proposed.

The Economy

Mr. Speaker: I inform the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition and those of his right hon. and hon. Friends. In addition, under the powers given to me by Standing Order No. 35, I have selected for a second Division at the end of the debate the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and those of his right hon. and hon. Friends.

A very long list of right hon. and hon. Gentlemen wish to take part in the last day of the debate on the Queen's Speech. May I again appeal for brief contributions so that not too many are disappointed?

4.11 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move, at the end of the Question, to add:

"But humbly we regret that the Gracious Speech includes no proposals which can reasonably be expected to reduce the level of unemployment, revive manufacturing industry and utilise the full potential of the income temporarily gained from the exploitation of North Sea oil."

Yesterday during his statement to the House the Chancellor of the Exchequer invited us to take advantage of today's debate to discuss the autumn statement. It was not an invitation which we needed or which he was entitled to make, but I propose to accept it. Of course, I begin with a re-examination of the central plank of yesterday's manifesto, the sale of British Gas to finance temporary tax cuts.

In reply to my question yesterday the Chancellor insisted that the sale of British Gas simply brought tax cuts forward. I have the quotation here lest he should choose to deny it today, as he denied it yesterday afternoon. What the Chancellor said could mean only that, on his own assessment, without the sale of British Gas there would be no tax cuts next year and probably none before a general election. The tax cuts are to be financed by the sale of British Gas. The Chancellor ought to know, as I believe the country knows, that a policy of selling assets to raise revenue is one which no respectable or responsible private company would contemplate for a moment.

I ask him again the questions that he failed to answer yesterday. After the sale, how would he propose to make up the losses in annual revenue previously obtained from those assets? When the sale has financed a couple of years of tax cuts, how does he suggest that those temporary tax cuts will be sustained? When I asked him that question yesterday he mumbled a generalisation about the sale of other assets. May I therefore ask him specifically if what he hinted at as the afternoon went on is true? Is it the Government's intention to sell into private ownership the water industry? *[Interruption.]*

If the Government claim that the water industry should be sold to a private monopoly and that that private monopoly should control the price, supply and quality of something as basic as the water, the Chancellor had better tell us now whether he agrees with those Members in the backwoods behind him who are urging that that should happen. He must know that if water is sold into the ownership of a private monopoly few restrictions will be placed upon it to protect the consumer, for that is the pattern of privatisation. It will be the pattern of privatisation of British Gas as it was the pattern of privatisation of British Telecom.

If obligations were placed on the new private monopoly the selling price would not be as great as the Government need and will demand. What will happen with gas and with water will be exactly the same as recently happened with British Telecom. Vast profits have been made but enormous price increases have been imposed in an area where British Telecom has a monopoly and can exploit consumers.

The Chancellor denied all this yesterday. I see him nodding because he intends to deny it again today. When he makes a forecast or offers statistics, I think of those famous words from *Through the Looking-Glass:*

"'When *I* use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean'",

with which he fell off the wall. That view was expressed in less generous language by the *Daily Telegraph* today; it made the same point about the Chancellor's veracity in language which I would not dare to use. It described his statement as

"a combination of dodgy accounting and electoral cynicism".

Despite all the talk about expansion, growth and success, what we are to have over the next year or two years is an increase in consumption financed by temporary tax cuts paid for by the sale of British Gas. On his own figures, which again the Chancellor denied yesterday, there is a predicted growth over the next financial year in gross domestic product of £6·4 billion while consumption is to rise by rather more—£6·5 billion. At the same time imports will increase at twice the rate of exports and interest rates will be kept high by the Chancellor as an item of policy by which he can keep something like the present exchange rate. The net result must be a continuation of the damage to manufacturing industry which has characterised all that the Government have done for six years.

I know very well that the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry derided the report by the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade, but Government policy and the Chancellor himself vindicate what that report said; it warned that if we are to avoid a major social and economic crisis attitudes towards trade and manufacturing have to be radically altered.

Let us look at the real state of manufacturing industry about which the Chancellor made some boast yesterday and about which the Prime Minister made equally unlikely claims a week ago today. The real facts of manufacturing industry are these. For four years in a row net investment in manufacturing has been negative. Total manufacturing

investment is 20 per cent. lower than it was in 1979. Output is 6 per cent. lower than in 1979. The balance of manufactured trade has changed from a surplus of £5 billion in 1978 to a deficit of £4·7 billion.

The Government's attitude towards manufacturing trade has not changed at all despite the claims made by the Chancellor and the Prime Minister. All that has changed in the Chancellor's attitude towards manufacturing industry is his language. He no longer insults it as if he were a knight on the Tory Back Benches. He pretends that he is concerned about its welfare, but he and the House know that manufacturing industry remains crippled by high interest rates. The Confederation of British Industry was right to describe the autumn statement in one simple sentence:

"nothing in it for manufacturing industry except £250 million of extra costs".

Month after month and year after year we have tried to convince the Chancellor of the Exchequer that while manufacturing industry and the construction industry founder, unemployment will remain at a level which should be unacceptable in a decent society.

Despite the central continuation of the Government's proposals and plans to which I have referred, and despite the continuing destruction of manufacturing industry, the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) told everybody who would listen to him yesterday that we are witnessing a U-turn. That is what the hon. Gentleman and other Social Democrats were intended to believe from the Chancellor's statement. The Chancellor assumed that they would be easily satisfied, but I suspect that he did not believe that they would be quite as rapturously satisfied as the hon. Member turned out to be.

Last year, during the debate on the autumn statement, the SDP fell in behind our demand for a £5 billion boost, to be spent in the public capital sector. This year the Government propose 10 per cent. of that amount to be spent on construction of one sort and another.

The change in the Government's position, as I shall demonstrate in a moment, is far more a matter of presentation than of substance. The truth is that the argument for public sector capital spending advocated by the Opposition, the CBI, the TUC, a large number of Conservative Back Benchers, and by some right hon. Members in the Cabinet has actually won the day. There is now a virtually unanimous consensus that the Government should be spending more on public sector capital. What the Government announced yesterday afternoon was very little indeed, said in order that they could not be accused of doing nothing.

The basic economic policy remains, and it involves a writing off of 3·5 million men and women who are unemployed. They have been written off because they are politically expendable. Although, no doubt, the wets in the Cabinet will seize on the announcement as a sop to their consciences, the minuscule increases in housing renovation and hospital building will finance virtually no jobs. I have it on the authority of the Prime Minister. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) may laugh at that authority. Some of his hon. Friends around him may take the Prime Minister more seriously than he does.

On 10 December, the Prime Minister told me that the cost per job through increasing infrastructure can vary from £35,000 to £55,000 a year. Let us take the position in the middle. Let us assume that the Prime Minister was right and that a job financed by investment in construction costs £45,000. If the Prime Minister was right, what the Government announced yesterday and what was heralded as a U-turn by the SDP will produce 11,000 new jobs. The infrastructure proposals, the capital works, will produce one new job for every 3,000 men and women unemployed.

If we are witnessing a U-turn, it is a U-turn of a very strange shape, and it should be described in a little honest detail. The Chancellor certainly will not do that. This year there has been some reflation. The Prime Minister has denounced reflation. She promised that there would be no reflation, but there has been reflation. It has come about not by intention but by incompetence.

Social security payments were increased by £1·2 billion above the original estimate as inflation is higher than anticipated because of the mismanagement of the exchange rate by the Chancellor in January.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Is the right hon. Gentleman saying that he begrudges the increase given to the pensioners and others?

Mr. Hattersley: I am saying that if we had been in power we would have paid them the full increase that they were promised, rather than a few measly coppers.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: No, I shall go on to list all the other reasons why we have had the reflation that the Prime Minister promised we would not have.

The payment has been larger than the Chancellor intended because inflation has been higher than he prophesied. Inflation has been higher than he prophesied because of the catastrophe that he caused for the exchange rate in January. But that is not the only reason.

The external financing limits on the nationalised industries were relaxed by £1 billion, largely because of the miners' strike, which, the House will recall, was regarded by the Chancellor as a sound investment for the nation.

Local authority spending was £1 billion more than the Government planned. Local authority spending is always more than the Government plan, because the Government never expect to hold it down to their planning figure. The planning figure is always devised artificially low in the hope that the local authorities can be intimidated. The local authorities never are intimidated, so the Government's local authority spending plan is always out of line.

The cost of EEC membership was £500 million more than anticipated. The extra cost of EEC membership was alone virtually as much as the combined extra funds being made available next year for house building and renovation and hospital building.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow) *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I do not want the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) to be over-anxious. He will have to wait with patience until the end of this entire passage.

The Government are spending £5 billion more than they intended on programmes. They have exhausted the reserves entirely with five months left to go. The Government—the Chancellor will correct me if I am wrong—have established the precedent of talking to the House about the sums left in the reserve. That is something that Chancellors in the past have never felt they had to do. In addition, the Government have exceeded the PSBR

[Mr. Hattersley]

target by £1 billion. All those things have added to this year's involuntary reflation, and that is not the only thing that has happened.

The policy of reflation — not the policy but the accident—which the Prime Minister promised would not happen while she was in Downing street has been supplemented by other factors. They are all factors of which the Government disapproved but over which they were unable to exercise any control. Wage increases have outstripped inflation. The American deficit has attracted British exports. The collapse of the pound, for which the Chancellor was responsible, temporarily helped those exports. Investment decisions have been brought forward to beat the Government's decision to phase out capital allowances. Those are the reasons why there has been a reflation this year, but none of them is likely to be repeated next year.

The Chancellor's intention is to hold next year's programmed spending below the level at which it stands this year. So those right hon. and hon. Members in his party who feel that he has abandoned the financial rectitude by which he has made his name can rest in peace. There has been no U-turn in the statement. There has been a sort of L-turn.

I will remind the Chancellor of what is meant by no U-turn. No U-turn means the continuing collapse of manufacturing industry, the continual deficit on our manufactured trade, the continual squandering of North sea oil revenues on unemployment rather than on jobs, and, above all, no U-turn means 3·5 million men and women still condemned to unemployment.

Mr. Hayes: It is always a great joy to see the right hon. Gentleman jumping through the hoop so well, but he has a nerve to stand there talking of honouring promises with the eloquence of Satan denouncing sin. After all, he was a member of a Government which actually robbed pensioners, by changing to the forecasting method, of over £1 billion. His Government also cut hospital expenditure by about one third. Is not the real reason why he is huffing and puffing at the Opposition Dispatch Box that his enthusiasm for putting his own economic policies before the electorate is the enthusiasm of a turkey looking forward to Christmas?

Mr. Hattersley: I am grateful for the opportunity to have a drink of water.

What I was talking about, and what the House will on all sides have to concentrate on sooner or later, is the level of unemployment which, as the hon. Member for Harlow ought to know, is a rather more serious matter than the intervention that he has just made. He will, I hope, know that Opposition Members and the country in general will not be fooled by the softening of the language of the Prime Minister and the Chancellor on these matters, but will be influenced only by a change of attitude and of policy.

The pathetic package presented yesterday by the Paymaster General will make no substantial difference to the level of unemployment. The first half of the statement simply repeated previously announced palliatives and cosmetics. Then we turn to the latest contrivances invented by Lord Young.

When Lord Young was appointed, we on the Opposition Benches said that his task was to obscure rather than to solve the problem. How right we were, as witness the evidence of yesterday's package from the Paymaster General. With unemployment running at 3·5 million, he promised us that we are to have an expansion of unemployment clubs at which the unemployed can come together to discuss their problems. The unemployed know what their problem is. Their problem is the Government, a Government who base their job creation programme on a mistake and a slander. Virtually every one of the proposals outlined by the Paymaster General yesterday was based on the slander that things have to be done to persuade the unemployed to go to work.

That is the reverse of the truth. The unemployed want to work. The unemployed do not want advice on how to go about the business of rehabilitating their attitudes towards work. They want jobs. Those jobs could be provided by a massive investment in roads, railways, sewers, new schools and hospitals and, above all, new housing.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): The right hon. Gentleman is obviously returning to the theme of blaming unemployment on the Government. Does he perhaps recall a speech by his hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) in 1978, in which he accurately predicted the figure for unemployment as it exists today, said that it was due to demographic factors and added that any attempt to blame that on a Conservative or a Labour Government would be wrong?

What has changed since then, apart from the fact that the right hon. Gentleman is now on the Opposition Benches and is clearly likely to stay there for some decades to come?

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman is to be congratulated on his perception, for I am blaming 2 million unemployed on the Conservatives. I am delighted that, after all these years, he has begun to understand that point. I propose to deal with the demographic point when I turn to the false claims made by the Prime Minister and others about how many jobs have been created in this country. If the hon. Gentleman will contain himself in patience, I promise the House that I will deal with that point exactly. At the moment, I am telling him and the House what we believe and what the majority of people in the country believe, that the best way to reduce unemployment is by concentrating available resources on public sector capital investment which, as well as reducing unemployment, will do jobs which, in the national interest, are in desperate need of being done.

The Government's report, published only yesterday, said that we need to spend £20 billion on public sector housing repairs. Yesterday, we were promised £230 million. The difference between these two figures is wholly consistent with the Government's record on public and private housing.

Speaking in this debate last Wednesday, the Prime Minister said that Labour could not hold a candle to the Government's record on housing. I thought that it might be worth a small comparison to see whether the Prime Minister on this occasion had made a boast that she could substantiate. Let me tell the House the figures on which, according to the Prime Minister, the Conservative record is such that we cannot hold a candle to it.

Since 1979, public and private housing stock has increased by 1 million. In their five years in office, the Labour Government increased it by 1·5 million, an annual

increase in housing stock 50 per cent. better than the Conservative record of which the Prime Minister boasted. I can use the Prime Minister's phrase from another debate: we did better every year than they did in any year.

Yesterday, the Chancellor could have begun to make amends for these six years of appalling levels of house construction. He could have provided money to build houses and to create jobs, but he did not choose to do so. No wonder the Paymaster General was shamefaced in his statement about unemployment, and no wonder he was confused during his performance on *Newsnight* on Monday, in which he claimed, as I understand even honest Ministers are required to claim, that the Government had achieved a growth rate of 3 per cent. It was pointed out to him that the real average growth since 1979 was 1·3 per cent. a year, to which the Paymaster General retorted, "You've chosen the period carefully". That was the lifetime of a whole Government.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Before the right hon. Gentleman leaves the question of public sector capital expenditure, will he tell us, when the sewers have been rebuilt and the new hospitals finished, what happens to all the people who have been temporarily employed on all these social programmes? Secondly, will he tell the House where the funds are to come from? If from the taxpayer, will he tell the taxpayer by how much? If from borrowing, will he tell industry by how much its interest rates will have to rise to finance it?

Mr. Hattersley: Three points can be extracted from the hon. Gentleman's question. The first is on taxes, and I promise the House that I am coming to that. The second is on interest rates, and I promise the hon. Gentleman that we shall not maintain interest rates at uniquely high levels for a uniquely long period, which is the record of the present Chancellor. The third is what happens when we all have the decent house that we deserve, the roads are perfect and all the hospitals are in use. That is the process by which we generate some real growth. By investing in capital, one generates growth. By selling off capital, one does no more than promote the temporary consumer boom which is the object of the Chancellor's policy.

I do not wish, however, to over-estimate the Government's achievements. I have mentioned a 1·3 per cent. growth during the Government's lifetime. Without the gratuitous bonus of North sea oil, growth under this Government would have been barely 0·75 per cent. a year. Before the Chancellor begins to take credit for North sea oil, let me tell him that the only connection North sea oil revenues have with the Government's current economic policy is that the policy wastes and dissipates North sea oil by spending every penny on the cost of unemployment —larger numbers of benefits, lost tax revenue—instead of using that money to put Britain back to work.

Whenever we talk about putting Britain back to work, we are told by the Prime Minister, as we were told by the Chancellor yesterday, that there are in this country 675,000 new jobs which have been created as a result of Government policy. This is an attempt by the Government to switch the argument from unemployment to employment. For my part, it is a switch in which I am perfectly prepared to take part, because the assertion that this Government have created, or have caused to be created, 675,000 new jobs is simply not true.

Even within the rules by which the Prime Minister attempts to justify her contention, the figures are wrong. Nearly 40,000 of those so-called new jobs are part-time —perhaps only a few hours a week. We know from the Government's own statistics that the fall in full-time jobs over the period is 100,000. We have 100,000 fewer full-time jobs than two years ago, and the 675,000 is therefore made up either of part-time jobs or the self-employed. I say "either" because none of us knows the figure for the self-employed. There is no statistical basis on which it is calculated. There is simply a guess made by the Government, and that guess increases every time they want to boast about how well they have done on job creation.

Even if we accept all this and believe — incredible though it may be — that 675,000 new jobs have been created by this Government, there are still 1 million fewer jobs in the economy than there were when they were elected. Do not let the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) tell me that this is all due to demographic failure, to women coming back into the labour market and to a temporary bulge in the birth rate. There are now 1 million fewer jobs in the economy than in 1979, and that must be the result of economic policy.

Mr. Nicholls: The point that I put to the right hon. Gentleman a few moments ago is precisely the same as the one that I shall now put. I was saying that one of his own colleagues — a previous Labour Minister — accurately predicted the unemployment figures as they exist today. He said that it was due to demographic factors. The right hon. Gentleman must now tell us what has changed since then, other than the fact that it now suits him to say something entirely different.

Mr. Hattersley: Two questions immediately arise. If the hon. Gentleman, with his powers of perception and careful study of the speeches of Labour Ministers, knew that there would be an inevitable rise in unemployment, what were all those "Labour isn't working" posters about? Secondly, what is the demographic factor, the bulge in the birth rate and the pressure of women coming back to work that have lost 1 million jobs in the economy over the last six years? The hon. Gentleman should understand that that argument will not wash, and he does himself no service by copying the Prime Minister's peddling of this crude propaganda, because no one is any longer deceived by it. That is part of the Prime Minister's style, but it no longer deceives the country.

I promised to answer the question on taxes. Last Wednesday the Prime Minister claimed that Labour would increase the tax paid by school teachers, nurses and metal workers. She based her claim on a grotesque misquotation of what I had said. It was a misquotation so grotesque that it is only reasonable to assume that it was intentional. I cannot believe that the Earl of Stockton would demean himself by behaving in that way, but while I do not accuse the Prime Minister of telling a lie, I can at least tell the truth about the taxes for the three groups that she picked out.

She said that when Labour comes to power, school teachers, nurses and metal workers would on certain assumptions all be paying substantially increased rates of tax. That is simply not true. But we do not need to look into the crystal ball; we can examine the record for the three groups whom the Prime Minister chose to defend from high taxation.

Each of those three groups has been faced with the burdens of substantial increases in indirect taxation, but on

[Mr. Hattersley]

direct taxation each has suffered very considerable tax increases over the past six years. On the Prime Minister's assumption, a school teacher now pays £9 a week more than when this Government were elected, a nurse £7 a week and a metal worker £8·50 a week.

Mr. Lawson: Proportionately.

Mr. Hattersley: As I heard what the Chancellor in his ignorance said, I should tell him that that is in real terms and is now proportionately more of their income than they paid in 1979.

When the Chancellor asks such a question without knowing the answer, I wonder whether the Tory tax promises have been broken because of intention or simple incompetence. The figures that I have just given are the reality of the Tory tax promises. Having won twice on the promise of tax cuts, they have increased the national annual tax bill by £29 billion. They are now desperate not to fight the next election without the least pretence of keeping their word. They will therefore sell off British Gas and, in the Chancellor's own words, will use the money, to bring tax cuts forward. They will do so without knowing what will happen in three years' time to sustain their policy, without knowing how to make up the lost income from capital revenue, and without caring what happens after polling day.

Mr. Gerald Howarth *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I do not know whether I ought to give the Chancellor time to read the papers, but my final word is that in working this stratagem and in believing that a short-term bonanza can buy them votes, the Chancellor and the Government grieviously under-estimate the nature and character of the British people. The British people are more sensible than that, are less cynical than that and understand these matters better than the Government imagine. That is why they will certainly have no truck with yesterday's confidence trick.

4.47 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) today offered us another vivid illustration of the effectiveness of market incentives. His articles in *Punch*, for which he is handsomely paid, are always so much better than the speech he has just given us free of charge. If the right hon. Gentleman had his way and imposed his punitive taxes on those he calls "the bloody rich" who earn more than £20,000 a year, he would deprive himself of the incentive to go on writing his *Punch* column. We would all be the losers.

It would not just be *Punch* columnists who would be driven to consider early retirement if they found themselves punished by the taxes proposed by the right hon. Gentleman, but I understand that he also has a remedy for that—he will make it not worth their while to retire either. Once the pensioners' savings have been handed over to his national investment bank, the prospect of retirement on secure income will look very uncertain indeed.

I do not like to reopen wounds that have barely healed, but when the right hon. Gentleman was standing for the leadership of "that great movement of theirs" he said in his personal manifesto:

"We must know the cost of our programme and be prepared to explain the way in which the bills will be paid".

Quite so! We are still waiting for the answer. We listened to the right hon. Gentleman's speech, but we did not hear that answer once. We shall continue to ask for it.

By contrast, this is a Government who know their mind, a Government with a long-term strategy and the practical means of pushing it forward. The Gracious Speech admirably exemplified the strategy. The Government's aim is to follow the maximum of freedom within a framework of law and financial discipline. We believe in the freedom to earn and to spend, to set up businesses and to invest, to own the family home and a stake in one's firm and to trade at home and abroad.

These freedoms should be cherished in themselves, but they are also the foundations of prosperity. The Labour party thinks little of them. It subordinates them to the collectivist impulse. That is why after five years of Labour rule these freedoms needed strengthening and why the economy had lost much of its dynamic force.

The legislative programme in this Session has as its top priority the freedom of the individual to participate in wealth and enterprise. There is the legislation to expand the right to buy council homes. Some 870,000 houses and flats have already been sold to their tenants, and many more will follow as a result of the changes we intend to introduce.

The financial services Bill will mark a major step forward in the regulation of our liberalised financial markets, and the building societies Bill will increase competition to the benefit of individual savers and borrowers. The Bill to reform shop opening hours is another which will expand individual freedoms and at the same time contribute to economic wellbeing. All these measures, and many more, have one clear aim: to expand individual freedoms and make our country a freer and more prosperous place in which to live.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Can the right hon. Gentleman explain to my unemployed constituents what freedom they have under this Government to earn and to spend?

Mr. Lawson: They have the same freedom as they have had under Governments of this country for many years, but I shall come in due course to unemployment. First, I wish to deal with privatisation because the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook dwelt at some length on the privatisation programme, which is central to the process that I have described. It is without precedent in this or any other country and it has been steadily gaining momentum. Right hon. and hon. Members on the Opposition Benches wish that privatisation would go away, and I understand their feelings. They recognise that it is a policy whose time has come. It is popular with the whole country and increasingly it is being emulated abroad—in Canada, Japan, Germany and even in Socialist France and Sweden. It is a policy whose economic rationale is not in doubt.

I could not be more pleased that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook selected this aspect of our programme as the target for his attack both yesterday and today. In doing so, he displays all the flair of a General Cardigan leading the Light Brigade into the valley of death: identify the enemy's strongest point and then send in your most lightly armed troops. The best that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook can do is to complain, as he did today, that the

proceeds might be used to finance cuts in taxation—a curious example of trying to maintain that two rights make a wrong.

The privatisation programme will continue and accelerate because of the benefits it brings to the nation in the form of increased enterprise, increased efficiency and increased employee and individual shareholding. The decision to privatise British Gas stands on its merits. The fiscal judgment is quite another matter, and one that I shall justify to the House in my Budget speech next year. There can be no doubt about the outstanding success of privatisation so far.

We have transferred 20 per cent. of the state sector of industry that we inherited in 1979 into public ownership in its truest sense. All of those companies are doing well. In all of them the commitment to the future, the commitment to success, is stronger than ever before. The employees have demonstrated their commitment in no uncertain terms. Over a third of a million employees in nationalised industries have so far taken advantage of the opportunity to invest in their own company. And from British Aerospace, the first sale, onwards we have been attracting first-time investors to the stock exchange. The massive British Telecom issue alone acquired on flotation 2 million individual shareholders, of whom 1¾ million remain shareholders of BT. Half of them had never before in their lives held a share.

Opposition Members have now taken to saying that privatisation is all very well, but what will we do for an encore? That was the burden of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook's speech today. He also dealt with this point yesterday. I hate to disappoint him but there is no possibility of the privatisation programme running out of steam. British Telecom has paved the way for British Gas, and British Gas will pave the way for other candidates. And so it goes on. I could remind the House that the current cost value of the assets of nationalised industries is still over £90 billion. But I will make a promise to the right hon. Gentleman. He asks me what I will do when the privatisation programme is complete. This is my promise. If he is still shadow Chancellor at the end of the next Parliament, which his question presupposes, I will tell him the answer then.

In the meanwhile, let me put an immediate question to him. Which privatised companies would a future Labour Government, if there were to be one, renationalise, and on what terms? Would they renationalise British Telecom, British Airways, British Aerospace, Britoil, the British Gas Corporation? Would the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook care to answer that question? I should be pleased to give way to him. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] The right hon. Gentleman is coy, he is shy, he does not know what to say. But we shall continue to ask him the question so that he has time to think up an answer and tell us precisely which of those companies he would like to renationalise, and on what terms, because the nation and the House have a right to know.

The charge that privatisation does long-term damage to public finance is absurd. Privatisation reduces the need to borrow and thus the burden of debt interest. Moreover, members of the Opposition — right hon. Members in particular — appear to forget that private sector companies and their shareholders pay tax. As their performance improves, the more tax they will pay. It is equally absurd to argue that the Government's scope for cutting taxes depends upon privatisation receipts.

The route to a sustained reduction in tax rates lies, as I stated very clearly yesterday, in firm control of public spending against a background of continued economic growth. My statement yesterday demonstrated that we are maintaining, and shall continue to maintain, that firm control. We are clearly achieving steady economic growth.

As usual, however, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook seeks to have it both ways. His own plans would involve a massive inflationary increase in spending and borrowing, yet he talks of fiscal irresponsibility at a time when the public sector borrowing requirement, even if there had been no privatisation proceeds at all, would this year be the lowest as a percentage of gross domestic product that it has been for 14 years—yes, lower even than in 1981-82 when the Opposition howled about the stringency of my predecessor's 1981 Budget. It is lower even than that.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lawson: I would rather give way to the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, but I will give way to his monkey.

Mr. Bell: I must ask the Chancellor to withdraw that remark.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Although the expression was clearly discourteous, it is not an expression that I ought to require the Chancellor to withdraw. It has been used in a previous debate. Does the hon. Member wish to pursue his intervention?

Mr. Bell: The Chancellor referred to a public sector borrowing requirement of £8 billion. Is it not a fact that £1 billion of that £8 billion is due to the diminution in oil revenues? Is that diminution due to the exchange rate for the dollar or because we have entered a period in which oil revenues will diminish?

Mr. Lawson: I did not wish to upset the hon. Gentleman as he knows I like him, but I thought it was appropriate and he would enjoy it if I used a remark that Mr. Aneurin Bevan used about Mr. Selwyn Lloyd. In answer to the question, the reduction in oil revenues is as a result of the exchange rate against the dollar being different from what was envisaged at the time of the Budget.

Rolling back the frontiers of the state sector of industry has meant increased opportunities for private ownership. In the same way, our policy of restraining public expenditure means increasing the freedom of working people to keep, spend, save and invest their own earnings.

My statement to the House yesterday demonstrates the Government's continued success in restraining the growth of public spending. I was able to announce that expenditure has been contained within the cash totals that we set ourselves last July; that spending will be held broadly constant in real terms over the next three years; and that as a proportion of national output it will continue to decline, as it has in each year since 1982-83.

I also draw the attention of the House to a new feature in the autumn statement—the charts, which show that those broad trends in public expenditure are not significantly altered even when privatisation proceeds are left out of account.

[Mr. Lawson]

By the end of this financial year public spending will have been falling as a proportion of national output for three successive years. That is the longest consecutive decline since the 1950s. Yesterday's plans show that it is set to fall further over the next three years. That is already, I believe, making a major change to the performance of the British economy, creating room for enterprise and initiative. It will cause a still greater change in the years ahead.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook spoke about taxation. Certainly, proper restraint in public spending is central to the success of economic policy. It is central to the growth of enterprise, to the expansion of the wealth-creating sector and to the creation of lasting jobs; central to rising living standards and to the control of inflation; and central to reducing the burden of tax—on incomes, where it stifles initiative and risk-taking, and on employment, where it destroys jobs, directly and immediately.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook made his usual remarks about the growth of tax revenues since 1979. As I remarked in a sedentary intervention, and I am sorry that it was a sedentary intervention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he seems to go on finding it astonishing that, as the economy grows and earnings rise, so do individuals' tax bills in money terms.

The reason for the difference between the two Governments is this. Under this Government, real take-home pay has risen for people at all points on the earnings scale. For a married man on average earnings, that means a real increase in take-home pay of some 13 per cent. since 1979, compared with only a half of 1 per cent. under Labour. And what of the lower paid, for whom the right hon. Gentleman professes such concern? Under Labour, at only half average earnings, a man's take-home pay rose a little more — by some 4 per cent. Under this Government it has risen by 12 per cent.—three times as much.

Mr. Hattersley: Is the Chancellor glad or sorry about the phenomenon that he has just described? He told the City of London, assembled for a banquet, that wages were rising too much.

Mr. Lawson: The important point is that our unit labour costs do not rise too much. That is the point that I have made time and again.

The Government's tax reductions have not been confined to income tax. We have abolished the national insurance surcharge—Labour's tax on jobs. Altogether, we have reduced taxes on employment from 14 per cent. to about 9 per cent. of total tax revenue.

It is no good for the right hon. Gentleman to imply, as he sought to do this afternoon, that taxes are higher under this Government than they would have been under a Labour Government. No one in his right mind would believe that. No one will believe that the Labour party would have cut the basic rate, increased thresholds by 20 per cent. in real terms or abolished the national insurance surcharge, which it introduced. No, it would have put up taxes. It would have had to, to finance its profligate and unsustainable spending plans. There is, of course, an alternative, or so Labour Members think. They could have tried to borrow their way out of trouble. They had plenty of experience of that in the disastrous years up to 1976.

If—heaven forbid!—I had set the PSBR this year at 9¼ per cent. of GDP, as the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) did in 1975-76, we would have had a PSBR this year of £33 billion. No wonder the Labour Government had to go cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund. The contrast between the 1970s and today could not be more marked. The benefits of our policies of encouraging enterprise, initiative and individual freedom are now very clear.

We were told that giving economic power back to the people—shareholder power, members' power within the trade unions—was a foolish gamble. Nothing could be further from the truth. For many years in this country we suffered from a hardening of the economic arteries. New business formation was slow; industrial relations were disastrous. The country could be, and regularly was, held to ransom by small groups of workers in positions of real or imagined industrial power. All that has changed.

The number of strikes in British industry during the first nine months of this year was the lowest since well before the war. The whole trade union movement is undergoing a sea change in attitudes. The legislative measures that we introduced have now shown their worth. The unions have been given back to their members, and the members are telling their trade union bosses that they want to work and want their companies to succeed.

The old "them and us" divisions within British industry, which bedevilled industrial relations for so long, are breaking down gradually. I have no doubt that the dramatic expansion of employee share ownership has been a major contributory factor. There are now around 1,000 all-employee share schemes in existence, involving around a million employees. There were just 30 such schemes when we took office in 1979. The initial value of shares distributed under all those schemes is now over £1 billion, and the number of employee shareholders continues to grow day by day.

Last year's Finance Act allowed companies, for the first time, to establish discretionary share option schemes. They have seen an even more explosive growth. I can now tell the House that, a mere 18 months after the legislation, the number of approved schemes has just passed the 1,000 mark.

Throughout the 1970s the Labour party talked and talked about industrial democracy, but it did nothing. We have acted to bring about the most direct and influential form of industrial democracy that there is. Perhaps that is slightly unfair on the right hon. Gentleman. Perhaps during its last term of office the Labour party was encouraging other forms of ownership—co-operatives, for example. Certainly the figures show that there were almost 300 co-operatives in the United Kingdom when Labour lost office. And the number now? More than 900. That growth in co-operatives, which I wholeheartedly welcome, is yet another aspect of the revival of the small business sector.

We have been suffering during the 1980s from the lack of new business formation in the 1970s. It will take a while before we can see the full effect of what has happened to encourage their growth, but we know that the benefits are on the way. Look at the growth of new businesses. Business start-ups outstripped failures by 36,500 last year. That is a net addition of 100 new businesses for every day of the year—a sharp acceleration in the rate of new business creation, which was already at a high level from 1980 to 1983.

The Government are assisting that process in every way they can, because it has been demonstrated throughout the world, particularly in the United States and Japan, that countries with a strong, small business sector are best able to adapt to changing economic circumstances and to maintain high levels of employment.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey North-West): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lawson: The business expansion scheme has made a particularly important contribution to the revitalisation of small businesses in the past three years.

The latest results we have for 1983-84, the first year of the scheme, show that 715 companies raised BES finance of more than £100 million, from about 20,000 investors. Although the following year's results are not yet complete, we already know of more than 500 companies that have again raised BES finance totalling more than £100 million. The final figures for 1984-85 will almost certainly show a substantial increase over 1983-84, the first year of the scheme. Much of this money is going to small-risk enterprises, as the scheme intended it should. Business expansion scheme money is only part of a huge growth of the venture capital industry during the past five years. In 1979 a mere £10 million of venture capital was invested in this country. Last year it was more than £300 million. This is true seed corn investment and the key to the jobs of tomorrow.

It is a great pity that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has not noticed this development. If he had, he might have saved himself the embarrassment that his proposal for a national investment bank has caused him. The right hon. Gentleman wishes to create a state-owned fund run by out-of-work bankers and union bosses, backed by money siphoned out of the pension funds — a political slush fund. He wishes to find investments which the rest of the financial community have failed to spot.

There are those who say that this is a return to the old game of trying to pick winners, but that is an unfair criticism of the right hon. Member because he has made it clear that:

"it's almost impossible for the Government to pick winners".

The national investment bank would be in the business of picking losers. I have every confidence that it would find them, and lose the pensioners' money in the process.

Mr. Grylls: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has rightly stressed the importance of the capital venture market and its growth in the successful creation of new firms. The business expansion scheme has been successful. Will my right hon. Friend consider whether people could take advantage of the BES to invest in their own companies? I know that that is a problem but consideration of the matter would fit in with the Government's other policies and such provision would be helpful and popular.

Mr. Lawson: I intend to look into that and other aspects of the BES in the light of the Peat Marwick report. If there are to be changes, I shall announce them in next year's Budget.

At the outset I stressed the twin themes of the Gracious Speech—maximum freedom within a framework of law and financial discipline. The results of that strategy are already impressive — steady growth of output and declining inflation. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has once again been through his list of selective statistics in an attempt to denigrate that success. The right hon. Gentleman spoke about the performance of manufacturing output and referred to the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade. It is worth demonstrating the quality of the report's reasoning. I am not saying that all of its conclusions are wrong but on the whole it does not form a helpful contribution to the debate. In paragraph 72 the report states:

"But sustainable growth has not been possible and will not be possible without a favourable trade balance in manufactures".

That is bad luck on the United States with a trade deficit on manufactures—no growth for the United States. It is even worse luck on the world because there is no way that the world can achieve a surplus in manufacturing.

Paragraph 87 of the report states:

"The committee have received devastating evidence from the Association of British Chambers of Commerce (ABCC) on decline in our manufacturing industries . . . between 1980 and 1983 they estimate that assets and capacity of manufacturing industry fell by 24 per cent".

The figures given are for only one company, and they are wrong. The share of manufacturing in total output has fallen in the United Kingdom, but although some capacity has been lost in manufacturing, much new capacity has been created. There is no clear evidence to show a loss of capacity between 1980 and 1983. However, manufacturing investment last year and this year combined has risen in real terms by more than 25 per cent.

I agree that the share of total United Kingdom output of manufacturing has fallen, but that is nothing new—it has been a feature of the past 25 years. It is not peculiar to the United Kingdom. The same has happened in most other major industrial countries, such as Germany and the United States. What matters is manufacturing's future, which depends pre-eminently on its productivity and profitability. In terms of productivity, growth and profitability alike, manufacturing industry under the Government has done far better than it ever did under Labour. Total national output is well ahead of what it was when we first took office and has been growing for almost five years now at an average of 3 per cent. a year.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook also seems to be concerned about our investment performance. Despite the world recession, the level of total fixed investment in the United Kingdom in 1985 looks like turning out some 9 per cent. higher in real terms than when we first took office. How does that compare with the Labour Government? They just about managed to achieve an increase in fixed investment of 1 per cent. They are in no position to preach about capital investment.

What about the important matters that the right hon. Gentleman chooses not to discuss? The inflation rate next year is likely to be not merely better than that achieved by the previous Labour Government; it is likely to be little more than half the best figure they achieved in all of their years in office.

Of course, we all recognise that we cannot be satisfied with the way in which the economy is operating when we are faced with unemployment at its current level. Unemployment is a human and social problem of the first importance — to say nothing of the waste. But it is a cruel deception to say that by borrowing and spending more the Government could cut unemployment overnight. If that were true, there would be no unemployment in Europe or anywhere else today. There is nothing easier for a Government than to borrow and spend other people's money. The answer to the problem of unemployment lies

[Mr. Lawson]

in the firm pursuit of anti-inflationary policies, and continued strenuous and painstaking efforts to improve the flexibility of our markets, especially the labour market.

There are already signs of success. There are about 600,000 more people in work in the United Kingdom now than there were when we were returned to office in June 1983. Opposition Members are always infuriated by this statistic. They try to claim that these jobs are not real jobs. They imply that self-employment, which has grown explosively in recent years, and women's jobs, are somehow less valuable to the community than other types of work. We reject that view. Our labour markets are responding to changing social patterns. Many married women want part-time employment outside the home. For many people, as they bring up children, that is just what they need to balance the family budget and allow them sufficient time at home. I see no reason to sneer at them for doing so.

Changes in employment behaviour are part of the increased flexibility we need if the economy is to continue to grow.

Mr. Hattersley: The Chancellor has got the script wrong. He should not say that there are 675,000 more jobs. He should say 675,000 new jobs. That is not true either, but that is the propaganda line that he should be taking.

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. Gentleman seems to have as much difficulty listening as he does understanding. I said that there are about 600,000 more people in work, and that is true.

Mr. Hattersley: We want more jobs.

Mr. Lawson: There are more people in work. *Hansard* will record that very clearly.

Unemployment has recently started to show welcome signs of a reduction. Last month's small fall was further encouraging evidence that the prospects for the second part of this Parliament are considerably better than for the first. The Government intend to maintain the same policy framework that has produced the impressive results for output, inflation, investment, balance of payments, productivity and employment that I have already described. That is the framework set out in the medium-term financial strategy, and in my Budget next year I shall again set out the guidelines for the medium-term financial strategy.

Many hon. Members are still anxious about the international financial scene. They see growing protectionism and the persistent problem of international debt as two clear risks to the generally favourable world scene. The Government are trying to resolve those problems. In the past two months there have been two significant developments. First, the group of five meeting, which I attended in New York on 22 September, produced the so-called Plaza agreement, which addressed itslf to the threat of protectionism. The United States Administration showed their concern about the high level of the dollar and their determination to act to correct it. A concrete and practical agreement was reached collectively to take the necessary action to secure adjustments in the exchange rates between the dollar and other major currencies.

The results of that meeting are there for all to see. Since 22 December the dollar has depreciated by 14 per cent. against the yen, by 8 per cent. against the deutschemark and by 3 per cent. against sterling. Further action will be needed, not least to reduce the huge fiscal deficit in the United States and to remove obstacles to the free operation of financial and other markets in Japan. The threat of protectionism has thus receded slightly. There has been a change of mood in the United States Congress and there must now be a far better chance that if protectionist legislation is proposed it will not be put into effect.

The Plaza agreement has shown the potential for increased co-operation among countries which follow the same economic strategy.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): How can the Government hope to solve America's problems when America shows no willingness to solve its own problems? The United States had a $15 billion deficit in one month and now has a total deficit of $200 billion. The Americans want the rest of the world to solve their problems because they will not impose the financial stringency which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor considers to be the hallmark of Government policy. Why is it right for the Americans to continue spending while sterling and our interest rates are kept high to help them when they will not help themselves because they fear the consequences?

Mr. Lawson: I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) will be able to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and develop his arguments later in the debate. In all seriousness, the threat of protectionism is not just America's problem but the world's problem and it is right that we should combine to combat it.

The United States Treasury Secretary, Mr. Jim Baker, has launched an important new initiative to deal with the threat of international debt. He has proposed a new role for the World Bank and the regional development banks. Those banks would be provided with additional capital to support increased lending, but that lending would be linked to, and conditional upon, sound and realistic economic policies in the recipient countries. Her Majesty's Government fully support this initiative, which offers a sensible way forward for countries in the grip of severe financial difficulties. I believe that it makes good sense to develop the role of the World Bank in this way.

Let me make one thing clear. It cannot and should not be for Governments to determine the attitudes of commercial banks towards the prospects of debtor countries or to tell them what decisions they should take. Those decisions, the level of individual banks' exposure to particular borrowers and the management of the banks' portfolios, must remain theirs and theirs alone, within the proper constraints set by their supervisory authorities. Both those international developments will be welcomed by the House. They increase the chance that we shall continue to enjoy a combination of steady growth and falling inflation unknown in this country for a generation.

We are now close to the mid-point of this Parliament. Since the British people returned us to office with an increased majority at the last general election the Government have amply justified their confidence. Inflation has averaged 5½ per cent. per year, economic growth has been running at 3½ per cent. per year, and manufacturing output has risen by more than 3 per cent. per year.

The House will wish to know how I see the prospects for the second half of this Parliament. I am afraid that I have to disappoint the Opposition and say that the prospects are rather good. I hope that hon. Members can grit their teeth and get over that. Inflation is now firmly on a downward path and should be under 4 per cent. by the middle of next year. The CBI's latest survey reports that cost pressures on industry are the weakest for 20 years, and the outlook for prices is the best since the 1960s. Inflation is firmly under control, and steady growth will persist. There is no sign of the long-heralded downturn on the horizon, provided that we continue to pursue cautious, sensible financial policies in combination with our other measures to encourage enterprise.

The measures that we shall be bringing before the House this Session represent a broadening and a deepening of the strategy that we have followed for the past six years. They will move us steadily and resolutely towards greater prosperity and a better society in which, within the law and within the overarching framework of financial discipline, each individual can exploit his or her talents to the full.

5.28 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): I beg to move, at the end of the Question, to add:

But humbly regret that the Gracious Speech contains no evidence that the Government seriously plans to tackle Britain's most fundamental problems; believes that further action is needed to stimulate manufacturing industry through a cut in interest rates and a more competitive exchange rate via sterling's entry into the exchange rate mechanism of the European Monetary System; and calls on the Government to seek a reduction in unemployment through selective capital investment, a fair and durable incomes strategy, lower employers' National Insurance contributions, and an expansion of the community programme and skill training.

The amendment draws the attention of the House to the Government's failure to tackle the most fundamental problems in Britain.

On the first day of debate on the Gracious Speech, the Prime Minister devoted the latter part of her speech—that was the part that the newspapers highlighted—to law and order. In her speech the Prime Minister embarked on a course that I hope the Government will not pursue—I am glad that the Home Secretary did not pursue it in his speech—which appeared deeply to polarise the Government and the Labour party. The Prime Minister tries to paint the Conservative party as the party of the police and the Labour party as the anti-police party. There are enough genuine divisions in British politics without seeking to exacerbate a division over the police force.

The debate on crime revealed the seriousness of the position. The figures for violent crime, crime involving firearms and arson are all now at record levels. This betokens a sense of decline not just in the inner cities but in the values of this country, and that is causing much concern. The declining social scene revealed by the raw crime statistics must be placed beside a record of serious economic decline.

Had the House debated this Gracious Speech in 1950, Britain would have been the third richest country in the world, with an average standard of living exceeded only by the United States and Switzerland. We were then a relatively strong economic power. Britain is now 19th in the industrial league table and we are now in the third league of industrial nations. In 1985, six years into this Government, Italy has surpassed the average standard of living in Britain. On present trends, despite the Chancellor's optimism, it is likely that by the early 1990s Spain will have a higher average standard of living than Britain. In the next two to three years East Germany may surpass us.

That is the background of our economic decline—of Toxteth, Brixton, Handsworth and Tottenham. They are scenes of violence which when seen from abroad on TV are not totally dissimilar—though we may not like to face it—to some of the scenes of violence we have seen in South Africa. We must view the realities. The Chancellor may not like to hear it, but one of the characteristics of his period in office is his blithe disregard for the social consequences and the scarring of generations to come resulting from appalling unemployment.

A clear divide is beginning to emerge in British politics. It is certainly not a divide which cuts straight across the House, but cuts deeply into the Conservative party. It is personified by the Chancellor and the Prime Minister, who clearly believe that the next election can be won even with high levels of unemployment, and that the crucial thing is to address the aspirations and dreams of the predominantly Conservative electorate—those in work—for whom it is thought the most crucial thing is to cut the standard rate of income tax, give them a higher standard of living and create the sort of consumer boom at which the Conservative party is a past master.

Before we extol the merits of Lord Stockton, I should mention that I remember spending many years as a prospective candidate decrying the 13 wasted years of Tory misrule. Lord Stockton was then known by the rather different name of "Supermac". He could have taught even the Chancellor of the Exchequer a thing or two about how to manipulate the economy to produce a consumer boom prior to an election.

The Chancellor will not lecture us any more about the public sector borrowing requirement, and M3 will again be what it is for most people in this country — a motorway. The monetarist statistics to which we have had to listen and the lectures from the Prime Minister on the fiscal probity of this Government are a thing of the past. We are now beginning to see a relaxation of the fiscal stance in order to produce the same candy floss consumer boom that we experienced from Conservative Governments through the fifties and early sixties. The only problem then was that Reggie Maudling got his timing wrong.

Our criticism of the Chancellor of the Exchequer is not that he has relaxed his fiscal stance; we have been urging him to do that for many years. It is not that he has relaxed his public sector borrowing requirement; we have also been urging that for many years. What we criticise is that the direction of the relaxation is not towards resolving our deep-seated economic problems; it is not to use the assets from sales to build up other assets; it is not to use the proceeds from British Gas to try to rebuild the manufacturing sector which was savagely destroyed as a result of the exchange rate policy pursued by the Chancellor when he was Financial Secretary to the Treasury and by the then Chancellor in 1980-81.

The Government intend to use those assets to massage the electorate. The truth about the Chancellor's strategy, which is of course wholly identified with the Prime Minister, is not that it is an economic strategy—it is an electoral strategy. The Budget he is preparing will never again be called a Budget for jobs; it will be a Budget for votes. Towards the end of the year the rate of

[Dr. David Owen]

unemployment will probably move down slightly. That is possible, and I certainly hope that towards the end of 1986 and in early 1987 we will see a real fall in unemployment. I will rejoice if that is the case. However, if we are looking to the Government to mount a serious attack on unemployment and to face the devastation that has occurred in our northern industrial towns; if we are looking to them to try to restore, revitalise and regenerate the inner cities or for hope for young school leavers that they will not spend three or four years without a job; or for investment in higher education and science and in the skilled training which is the only real asset we can build up for the next century, we will look in vain.

The Government are not seeking to restore the real strength of the economy or to prepare for the day when the oil revenues start to decline. That is the real indictment of the Chancellor and the Prime Minister. It is as if they do not wish to face the reality of economic decline. It is as if they do not want to use the fortunate circumstances of the present, when we still have quite substantial oil revenues. Looking at their policies for privatisation, one finds that it is not as if they are prepared to analyse the real purpose of privatisation.

We have yet to see the legislation which the Secretary of State for Energy is to produce. Will we see a real regulation which will try to protect the consumer from the monopoly power of British Gas? The Chancellor says yes. I hope that he is right. Will we see a freeing up and a creation as far as possible of competition? Of course, the trouble is that to do that would reduce the attractiveness of the sale of British Gas. There is a dilemma here and I hope the consumer interest and the competitive and strong economic interest triumphs. We will ask, "Where is that money going to be spent?" Is it going to be spent on improvements to the infrastructure that are still demanded by many of the outside critics of the Government, whether they be the CBI or British industry, or is it going to be spent, as the Chancellor hints and as Tory Back Benchers appear to want, on a reduction of the standard rate? There is even a division of opinion about whether or not it should be used to take more people out of taxation.

A deep and almost moral argument will go on in the country over the next couple of years. The Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister have misjudged the views of even the traditional Conservative voter. The Chancellor will find in the south of England just as much as in the midlands and the north a sense of deep anxiety among the people about how we ought to be diverting our resources. Even those with a job who are reasonably well off will question the case that they should be made slightly better off while they see millions of their fellow citizens without a job. The Government have a particularly cynical and rather too market-oriented view of their fellow men and women if they believe that votes are going to be bought at the next election in quite the same cynical way as they were bought in the fifties and early sixties. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Bought by your party."]

Not many people would argue that votes were bought by the 1979 Government. They were lost by that Government, not bought. Whatever else was being done in 1979, votes were not being bought. The 1979 election defeat stemmed more than anything from the fact that "Labour was not working". That was the headline, and a very effective attack was made on that Government because unemployment was then over 1 million. Did anybody believe in 1979, even those Conservatives who voted for the Government, that unemployment would rise to 3·5 million — or 4 million if we take the true, adjusted figures? Not many people thought that. If many people had thought that that would be the consequence of voting for the Tories, they would have hesitated.

Perhaps it is perfectly open and reasonable to argue that the Chancellor and Prime Minister are right, that the people do not want to be warned of economic decline or to face Britain's real position in the world. Perhaps they do not want to face the realities of crime and drug addiction in our midst or the despair and disillusionment that exists in all too many families up and down the country. Perhaps the Government believe that votes can be bought and that all that is necessary is to generate again the candy floss society, putting the emphasis on private affluence and allowing public squalor to continue.

The Prime Minister has made a major political misjudgment. I shall relish the ensuing political argument, because I believe that it is about time that we said to the people, "Your responsibility is to forgo those tax cuts." Those who have work and who are reasonably prosperous should tell the Government, "We want you to invest for the future because we are worried that oil revenues will start to decrease in the early 1990s." I do not believe that oil revenues will decrease as quickly as some people expect, and there will still be substantial gas reserves. But people have become more conscious of the vulnerability of our economy in the medium and long term, and with it the standing of Britain in the European Community and the world. A growing body of Conservative voters will find the style of the Chancellor and the Prime Minister deeply unattractive, and we will relish the challenge of gaining their votes.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that British voters know that our economic problems and the causes of our decline are rooted in the excessive trade union power which the Government of which he was a member fully supported, and in the investment measures which his Government fully supported? Those matters must be resolved if we are to reverse our economic decline, and the fact that the Government have started to resolve those problems is reflected in our present high investment and the fact that growth is increasing while inflation is decreasing.

Dr. Owen: Great mistakes have been made in the economic management and government of the country through the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. If none of us has the capacity to learn from some of those mistakes, whichever Bench he or she sits on, heaven help Britain in the next century. I have certainly learnt from some of the mistakes which I helped to make, and I am not ashamed to say so. Furthermore, 64 per cent. of the members of the Social Democratic party were not previously members of any political party, Conservative, Labour or Liberal. It is a wholly new political force. When those members listen to some of the sterile debates in the House and outside, they wonder whether we will ever learn or whether we will ever think afresh and anew. Is the Chancellor prepared to learn from the experience of 1980 and 1981?

Mr. Lawson: Yes.

Dr. Owen: He says, "Yes," and I believe that he is right to say that inflation will be kept down. But what

mechanism is he using to keep down inflation? The present high interest rates will devastate manufacturing industry even further. Another mechanism is the unrealistically high exchange rate. Apart from his prejudice towards the idea, he does not want Britain to join the EMS because he knows that the present rate is far too high. Britain needs a competitive exchange rate if its manufacturing industry is to prosper.

Mr. Lawson: Inflation would increase.

Dr. Owen: The Chancellor is right. If we reduce the exchange rate to a realistic level for our manufacturing industry, inflation will be affected. That is a great worry. We should not go into the EMS above about 72 to the basket of currencies; it is currently running at 79 and I would prefer it if we could go in lower. It would be much better to enter the EMS at a rate that we can hold and sustain. I believe, too, that a stable exchange rate would be of inestimable help to British industry. One way to reach a more realistic exchange rate would be to reduce our extraordinarily high interest rates. But the Chancellor will not do that because he is afraid that it might increase inflation. It appears that he is prepared to pay almost any price to keep inflation down.

The Chancellor is right to be worried about inflation. Anyone who believes that we can increase it lightly is wrong. But on the other side of the equation is our tremendous wasted capacity. I am referring not only to the 3·5 million people unemployed, but to our incapacity to rebuild our manufacturing industry, which is essential if our prosperity is to be guaranteed into the next century. Of course, we can and rightly do support other industries. I welcome the modest measures to help tourism and the service industries, but time and again the Government ask manufacturing industry to pay the heaviest price.

I would like employers' costs to decrease further, which is why the SDP advocates a reduction in the national insurance contribution. I do not like the fact that the employment measures — some of them desirable — announced by the Paymaster General yesterday must be financed by industry. Everything should be done to help to keep down unit costs and to keep Britain competitive —*[Interruption.]* The Chancellor may laugh, but one of the most worrying signs is the extent to which Britain is losing its competitive edge — something to which the CBI drew attention recently. It is no use comparing Britain now with the Britain of the past; if we compare ourselves with our Western competitors, we can see that we are losing our competitive edge.

I hope that the Chancellor will not repeat in 1986 the folly of 1980 and 1981: that to hold inflation down he will not saddle British industry with a long period of uncompetitive exchange rates and too high interest rates. If we have to pay the price of slightly increased inflation, I am prepared to pay it. The alliance will discuss the necessity for an incomes strategy to grapple with the problem. Private sector pay is increasing at about 8 per cent. a year——

Mr. Yeo: That is going back to the incomes policy of the 1960s.

Dr. Owen: No, it is not going back to the 1960s. We should try to learn from some of the mistakes of those incomes policies. We must try to retain competitive market pressure in the private sector, but, with an understanding to bargain within a certain range, competitive bargaining can be highly advantageous. That is what happens in many European countries. The "concertation" among unions, management and Governments in many western European countries has been beneficial in allowing them to expand, to reduce unemployment and to have a proper regard for the consequences of extremely high wages in some key sectors.

The key is to justify high wages through productivity. It is no use the Chancellor continuing without a sensible incomes strategy for the public sector. As grievances abound and unfairnesses multiply, we shall need an incomes strategy that embraces the public and private sectors. I do not wish to return to statutory controls; we know the difficulties and anomalies that they create. But to ignore the need for an incomes strategy, as the Government have tried to do in some areas, and then arbitrarily interfere in the sector which they most closely control—the public sector—is a recipe for division and for inefficiency. Market forces have not yet controlled the movement of wages from the private sector.

The Chancellor will ignore what I am saying, because he will not take risks with inflation, do anything serious about unemployment or markedly reduce interest rates. He is prepared to continue with our present high exchange rate. But I hope that he will realise from the comments that have been made on his announcement yesterday the unease that exists, not just in the City but in industry generally. His autumn statement was not received with great acclamation. "Creative accounting" is the nicest criticism used about it. I saw the description "dodgy" used in one newspaper that normally supports the Conservative party. We all know that the Chancellor is dodgy when quoting statistics and making predictions. He has an unparalleled record of failing to anticipate the facts, whether on unemployment, inflation or especially interest rates. He is wrong as frequently as he is right.

However, the Chancellor is right to claim credit for some things. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) said yesterday, the economy is not altogether bleak and there are some good signs. But our underlying weaknesses, whether social or economic, are not being tackled. All the signs are that the Government are heading for a rather cynical election ploy. They believe that, if they can put more money into the pockets of their traditional voters, their dissatisfactions will disappear and the Conservative party will be returned, it hopes, for a third term of office. The Government underestimate their own supporters and the morality, altruism and generosity that still exist in the British people.

We now see Conservative wets, like the Secretary of State for Energy, adopting privatisation. It seems to be a necessary move in the struggle for the leadership of the Conservative party. The Secretary of State for Defence is privatising the dockyards against the recommendations of the Select Committee on Defence and the Public Accounts Committee. Such proposals are of little value to the real economy but everything of value to the dogmatism that seems to be a necessary part of aspirations to Tory leadership.

The Chancellor appears to have no such aspirations and, watching the Government Benches when he speaks with his usual rudeness to most of his hon. Friends, I know that there is no need for any of us to fear that he is a candidate for the leadership. However, we fear that his

[Dr. Owen]

period of office will hasten the decline of the British economy and exacerbate the social tensions that already exist and to which the Government should be addressing themselves.

5.51 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): The Gracious Speech is a comprehensive survey of Government policy, but the way in which we debate it allows it to become compartmentalised. We take each aspect of it separately for a day. However, in his closing words, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor moved on to the international sphere, certainly in as far as it affected economic affairs. He pointed to two important developments in the past few months, both of them undertaken by Secretary of the Treasury Baker in the United States.

In the past two months, there have been four major developments — the two mentioned by my right hon. Friend, plus the arrangements for the summit which is to take place shortly and the movement of my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Chancellor and the Government further away from dogma and into pragmatism. All four interlink. I have become more and more impressed by the fact that in the 1980s we see that all of these aspects are irretrievably interlocked and one cannot deal with any one of them without dealing with the others.

The summit is of vital importance economically because of the burden of defence expenditure on the United States and its allies, as well as on the Eastern bloc. For that reason alone, let alone the danger of the arms race, it is in the interests of both East and West to reach a solid agreement about the limitation of arms. Therefore, it is not enough to wish the President well when he has his dialogue with Mr. Gorbachev in Geneva. What is required is a firm decision at that summit, by both men, on the principles of the limitation of arms, on which they will then embark. That is absolutely essential in the interests of the West.

Having agreed on the principles, the President and Mr. Gorbachev should then delegate to advisers, trusted not only by themselves but by those also taking part in the negotiations, the working out of the detail of the agreement that they wish to reach. This happened in 1963 with the first test ban agreement, the first of the post-war agreements between the super powers, and the one in which Britain was involved, the succeeding agreements of the non-proliferation agreement, the agreement on no testing on the sea bed—when I was Prime Minister—and the first and second SALT agreements.

We shall never get an agreement on these intricate matters with 150 officials sitting around the table in Geneva. We shall get agreement only by the principals settling the basis and then detailing those who will work them out. In 1963, Averell Harriman represented the President. He was trusted in Moscow because he had been ambassador there during the war. Lord Hailsham was asked by the Prime Minister to represent him, and he was trusted by the Americans because he has an American mother. Mr. Gromyko was was asked by the Russians because there was nobody else, and he was always there. In 14 days, those three worked out the first test ban treaty, which was signed in Moscow. I went there with Lord Home. That is the importance of a summit and that is what should and, I hope, will happen on this occasion. However, I must confess that I have little confidence in it doing so.

That brings us to the international economic situation. Some 29 per cent. of the United States budget, and 13 per cent. of our budget, is devoted to defence. Even with a loyal ally, there is a difference. The burden is simply immense, and has led to the large American budget deficit that has already been mentioned. That requires high interest rates, which in turn produce an uncompetitive dollar height. That means that a vast trade deficit is accumulated. In addition, the developing world has to pay high interest rates, and the burden on it is already intolerable. Therefore, there is a direct connection between the military and political budget and the economic situation in the United States, with a high budget deficit, a high trade deficit, high interest rates and the impact not only on the developing countries but on us in Europe and the rest of the world.

What will happen about those factors? In the light of what I have said about the summit, I cannot see that there will be any basic change in those aspects of the United States economic situation. The economy is wavering there and we shall not see substantial growth in it. Therefore, we all face the problem of the difference between the President and the Congress and what can be done about the budget deficit. As long as that remains, there will be high United States interest rates.

Therefore, it was an important development when the Secretary of the Treasury called the five together to try to find a way to reduce the strength of the dollar. My hon. Friends would term this as devaluation, and therefore deplorable. However, we should welcome it if the United States decides that it can devalue the dollar. That is the only way to try to deal with its trading position. By dealing with that, one can deal with protectionism. When sterling went down at the beginning of the year from $1·30 to $1·05, did anybody condemn my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for devaluation? No, nobody did.

Mr. Yeo: The United States has the most massive trade deficit in world history. The British economy is running at a substantial trade surplus and that is why devaluation is appropriate for America but not for us.

Mr. Heath: To talk in terms of devaluation with floating currencies involves determining at what level we can effectively trade in sterling. We must have regard to that, just as the United States should be moving into a dollar position at which it can redress its trade balance. If we can achieve that for sterling, we shall be doing a good thing.

I come now to the nature of the summit to get agreement to deal with the economic affairs. There must be no attempt to link any arrangement about armaments with any other factor. In 1963 we did not do so and we did not do so in any of the succeeding negotiations. To attempt to link the Geneva armaments talks with freedom in the Soviet Union or with Afghanistan or Latin America is doomed to failure automatically. One can deal with such problems in other forums. The Helsinki agreement deals with human rights, and there has been a review conference on that recently. There is the United Nations for other problems, and regional arrangements for central America. Therefore, any attempt to have a general agreement on all of these

spheres or to put armaments in the context of individual rights is dooming the conference to failure, which I hope will not happen.

The situation in the developing world is deteriorating rapidly, and is bound to affect us as an exporting country. Twenty three per cent. of the exports of the developing world are used solely in the repayment of debt and the payment of interest after all reconstruction. That is bound to lead to reduced imports, and a reduction in their standard of living, and those reduced imports will affect us as a manufacturing country.

For the first time in the first quarter of this year the flow of capital was reversed. Instead of capital going from the developed richer world to the developing countries, it went from the developing countries, the poor, back to the rich. That is continuing, and is a fatally damaging movement. What is more—this ties up with the concluding words of the Chancellor of the Exchequer—that movement ties up with the position in banking. Some people say that that movement will enable the banks, which are getting payment of interest and repayment of debt, to invest in other more profitable, more useful, more valuable and more interesting projects. However, that is not happening. The decisions are, rightly, left to the banks. The banks, having felt that they made mistakes in earlier years, are over-reacting and not putting that money into useful capital investment. Therefore, that represents a loss to the developing world, and to the trade of both developed and developing countries.

It is right to leave the decisions to the banking world, but I would not go so far as to say that nothing should be done to help commercial banks out of difficulties. I do not think that the Chancellor on principle can argue that that should never happen. The proper structuring of the debt burden can be done only if some burden is taken from the commercial banks, for which they must pay, by central banks, and if the international institutions take some burden from the central banks. The International Monetary Fund can do that with an issue of special drawing rights.

That is why the other initiative of Secretary of the Treasury Baker is so important. It is the proposal to provide $30 billion over three years to help the Third world in its indebtedness. That is a complete reversal of American policy, as the American Government openly admit. I sometimes wish that the Chancellor would follow the example of the Secretary of the Treasury. We can now urge other developed countries to follow his example. Thirty billion dollars will not be enough to deal with the position. In 1980 the Brandt Commission report recognised that $70 billion was required, and by now we must need nearly $100 billion if restructuring is to be successful and if we are to create the demand that we in the developed world want for our exports.

Many of the changes that the Chancellor announced in his statement yesterday are to be welcomed, particularly those which involve a change of attitude and approach. He is right to be proud of the achievements that he and his predecessor have brought about. His emphasis yesterday that he and the Government feel that they are getting nearer to 1973, 1972 and 1971 was impressive. They have every right to take pride in that because many of them took part at the time and helped in those achievements.

The Chancellor has nothing to report regarding manufacturing industry. Both investment and output is less than in 1979, and far less than in 1973, which is to be regretted. On unemployment, the contrast is between 580,000 and, to talk in round figures, 3,580,000. Although I welcome what the Chancellor has done, I cannot help comparing it with what is now widely acknowledged to be required. I agree with the Secretary of State for the Environment that what is needed cannot be done overnight. One can regret the speed at which it has happened, for example, in housing, but more can and should be done in that respect. Again, that elicits the cries of "Inflation!", or "Reflation means inflation!", which, by definition, is nonsense, or, "We can never borrow money or have debts". Even *The Sun*, well informed as it is, seems to take the view that we borrow nothing at present. The Chancellor should write to the editor and say that if he wants a knighthood he must recognise that there is a public sector borrowing requirement which is being satisfied, although it may not always be at the level that he wishes.

The question is one of balance, which is pragmatism. How much should we do in these spheres? We should be doing still more, and because of the amount of resources available, that will not lead to roaring inflation.

I now turn to one aspect of manufacturing which worries me. I do not see how the Chancellor's forecast of a fall in inflation to his projected level can occur by the middle of next year unless he keeps sterling high in dollar terms or makes it even higher. That will require interest rates to remain where they are or to become higher. They are high enough already. What is the consequence of that for industry? Every industrialist — not only the Confederation of British Industry as an organisation—says that he is doubtful whether his industry can possibly compete effectively for long with sterling at its present level. Immediately the shout goes up, "What would you have it at?" Industrialists will reply that they want it at £1·20 to the dollar, and lower for the mark, if the Chancellor likes to talk to them. The Lords Committee talked frankly to them—and the Government were a little unwise to react quite so quickly to an excellent report, particularly as it is on a theme on which they cannot produce answers, that is, the decline of the manufacturing sector. Sterling must be lower if we are to be effective in the export markets. As we are now in a pragmatic period, the Chancellor can handle that, and I hope that he will do so.

I now turn to manufactures and exports, and shall mention what the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry said yesterday about financing particular joint ventures. That is welcome, but it is inadequate and far too late. The five years' grace in payment, for example, does not compare with what is being offered by the United States, Japan and other members of the European Community. If there is an interest reduction, perhaps to 5 per cent., it will not compare with what is being offered by our competitors. One can point to innumerable cases, for example, to the Istanbul bridge. I was there when the whole affair occurred. Everyone was astonished that the British should blow their tops at not winning that tender. They said that the difference was $112 million, yet the British expected them to pay it so that the British could build the second Bosphorus bridge because they had built the first. That is unrealistic, and the gap is enormous.

Again, we have lost a contract for four conventional power stations in south-west China simply because our contractor put in the highest tender. It was 10 per cent. above the next highest, and 35 per cent. above the group which was put on the short list. That is what we must

[Mr. Heath]

contend with, and manufacturers must know that they cannot compete unless they can get the same sort of financial arrangements as their competitors and unless our interest rates are brought down. That is basic to the manufacturing crisis. Wherever one goes in the world one finds the same problem. There is a contract for housing in Istanbul that is open to us, but unless we can provide a 15-year period of grace we shall have the utmost difficulty in winning that contract, although the Turks want the British there. They beg us to give the same terms as our competitors.

We are terribly slow in reacting to these situations because of the whole process of going through the Departments. I am not one who knocks Departments because I know their problems well, but we are terribly slow in dealing with such proposals compared with our competitors. We ask whether the project is suitable, and now we also ask whether it will fit in with a suitable economic policy of the country that is borrowing the sums. All that takes months. In the meantime, our competitors walk in and take the contracts. I was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry once, so I know the bureaucratic problems. If we are to achieve contracts, we must speed up the process and be prepared to do things which, in the old days of conventional dogma, seemed horrifying.

We might emphasise the importance of the free market. In Britain, Government can determine the free market through legislation and regulations, but we cannot impose our form of free market on the rest of the world. If the rest of the world likes to have a free market like that of the Belgians, in which there are no interest charges or repayments for 10 years and repayments are over 15 years, we cannot expect them to accept our form of free market. That is what the world is about today. There is a gap between Government, banking, and industry — the manufacturers and exporters.

I hope that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will not hesitate but will persevere in his efforts. The changes that are taking place are most acceptable, and there is room for a considerable number of further developments in the sphere in which he is moving. However, there are two dangers in using resources for a reduction in taxation. The first is that if that reduction goes to individuals, it will be used largely for the consumption of imports from abroad, which will damage the industrial base. That is a problem for the trade balance.

The second danger involves the freeing of the nationalised industries. When a nationalised industry is bought, a large amount of investment money is involved. That goes out in a reduction in taxation for the whole range of taxpayers and is used for consumption. That is the real point about freeing the nationalised industries and putting them on the market. The timing is important. It is also important whether the resources are used to reduce taxation, which will lead to increased consumption and an increase in imported goods, or whether they are spent on infrastructure—schools, hospitals and so on. That is the point on which we should concentrate.

Much has to be done if we are to rebuild industry. The emphasis is always on the individuals. That is good. They have a rough time in a semi-depression, such as that which we are experiencing, keeping themselves going for more than a year. They have a tough time. The Chancellor smiles, but individuals do have a tough time. In my constituency, members of firms which are going bankrupt ask me how they can be rescued. That is a problem, but it does not mean that people should not take risks.

Such people complain that the Government urge them to export goods and ask whether I can get them finance to do that. I ask what sort of finance they need and I might be told "I want money to pay for my air fare". I tell the person "I am sorry. You are not in a position to organise exports to Japan if you cannot even pay your own air fare."

We must be careful about small business men, but we must ask how Government and finance work with existing companies to ensure that they remain and expand. *The Times* today contained a report from the CBI saying that 12 of our major 72 firms are considering moving all their manufacturing from Britain because of conditions here. That is immensely damaging. I suggest that the Chancellor devotes his attention to creating a sound manufacturing base.

Even if oil does not run out as quickly as many predict, 1995 is only 10 years away. How long did it take Nuffield to build up his motor business from the cycle shop opposite Balliol in Oxford? How long did it take GEC to become established so that it could undertake real manufacturing exports? A tremendous job is involved. We are talking about only 10 or 15 years, so the job must be dealt with at once. I urge the Chancellor and his colleagues to tackle the problem. They should carry on with plans for individuals and employers, but they must tackle the manufacturing problem. Let us provide money for research. Let us provide an education system on the scale provided by the Americans and the Japanese which will give our manufacturers the engineers and scientists that they need. Let us back that up with a foreign service which has the resources to deal with trade overseas.

China was mentioned yesterday. We have just established our first consulate-general outside Peking in Shanghai. The Americans, Germans, French and Japanese already have consulates-general in all the major Chinese cities. This is our first. Our staff consists of three in a city of 12 million people. They can carry on because they have part-time wives. Two of the wives help out. The Chancellor of the Exchequer may laugh, but the Japanese consulate-general and business group in Shanghai comprises 510 people. That is the contrast.

We have made a mistake in cutting our foreign services, in cutting our consulates-general and overseas broadcasts and in cutting the numbers of foreign students. All those cuts seemed to be principled at the time and saved a little money, but they have cost us an immense amount in the last five years.

The Chancellor could help by organising a campaign to restore the manufacturing base and to give manufacturers the facilities that they need. If we did that, we should be looking forward to 1995 and afterwards.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. A large number of hon. Members wish to take part in the debate, so short speeches will help to avoid disappointments.

6.17 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): I hope that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will stop sneering when he hears speeches such as that made by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). Much

of the Government's trouble is that whenever a speech, either by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) or the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, disagrees with the Government, the Chancellor sneers or laughs outright, as if all wisdom resided in the Government.

I have listened to the Chancellor and the Prime Minister over the last few years, and I would not dream of buying a second-hand car from either of them. Nobody believes a word that they say any more. In the six years that they have been in government, they have had the power to do exactly what they like, and yet 4 million people are unemployed. The figure is likely to be higher in two years, and yet the Government are embarking on a campaign to convince people that their Government have been an unmitigated success. They claim that everything is rosy and that people will not regret it if they vote for them a third time. People would be extremely stupid to be taken in a third time. Despite all that the Government have said, I guess that the unemployment figure two years from now, or whenever the next election comes, will be higher and the problem worse.

As a representative of Scotland, I know that regional policy is a dead duck. The Government do not believe in it because it runs counter to all their arguments about the law of the market. The Chancellor of the Exchequer talks about the magic of the market. He does not believe in regional policy or in intervention. Public sector housing is worse than it has been since 1919—since the end of the first world war.

Reports by Prince Philip and remarks by Prince Charles — members of a family that I greatly admire — have drawn attention to the problems that this Government have exacerbated, such as deteriorating housing and tension in our inner cities. Various experts — both political and non-political—estimate that to prevent our housing from deteriorating further we require additional expenditure of thousands of millions of pounds.

The Government, in their great statement yesterday, said that they would allocate another couple of hundred million pounds to housing. That will not even scratch the surface of the problem. Yet neither the Prime Minister nor the Chancellor can resist sneering at members of the royal family who draw attention to our housing problems and to the social and economic tensions in our inner cities— created by the Government's attitude to unemployment —where there is a feeling of injustice, unfairness and hopelessness. All that is a direct consequence of six years of the magic of the market.

The Prime Minister and the Chancellor have spoken of how important it is that everyone should obey the rule of law. No Government have been more guilty of breaking the law than this Tory Government. On no fewer than eight occasions during the past year or so, Ministers have disobeyed the law. Only last week the Secretary of State for Transport was hauled over the coals in the High Court because he interfered with a GLC decision on heavy lorries. The High Court told him to mind his own business. He was unlawfully trying to undo a legal decision taken by a council that the Government intend to abolish because it dares to go against their beliefs and convictions.

Year after year, private employers — many of them sitting on the Conservative Benches—disobey the law on minimum wages. The Government say, "Obey the law", but not to their friends. The other evening I watched a television programme about massive fraud in the City —that great citadel of Toryism. It involves not tens of pounds — the sort of sums involved in social security payments or income tax for which the Government are pursuing my constituents — but hundreds of millions of pounds. What are the Government doing about that? They are doing precisely nothing.

It is the same story with those firms disobeying the law by not filing their annual accounts and reports with Companies house. I refer not to tens of firms or hundreds or thousands of firms, but to hundreds of thousands of firms that are statutorily obliged to file their annual accounts and reports. The Government are doing precisely nothing about that either. They should not talk to us about law and order — they should put their own house in order from the City right down to the private firms that shovel money into the Tory party election fund.

The Prime Minister never ceases to lecture our people about law and order and crime. The Government have poured thousands of millions of pounds into the police force and the prison service during the past five years. No Conservative Member can deny that the Government have lectured nurses, teachers and others in highly responsible but low-paid jobs, saying the the country cannot afford to pay them a decent salary. The police have never been subject to that, and I say good luck to them. There is no shortage of money for law and order, the police force or the prison service.

What about the Falkland Islands? The Government have poured £2,000 million into those little islands 8,000 miles away, yet say that they cannot afford a few quid extra for our teachers. They cannot deceive the people. If they can find £2,000 million to pour into the Falkland Islands, they can find it for the teachers, the nurses and others who deserve it. It is a question of priorities and willpower.

The Prime Minister tells us that we cannot solve a problem by chucking money at it. Since 1979, she has done nothing else but chuck money at the police, the prison service and the armed forces, yet the level of crime today is 40 per cent. higher than when she began. I hazard a guess that in two years it will be even higher.

I challenge the Minister on three issues — law and order, housing and unemployment. Dare he assert that, as a result of the Government's new policies announced yesterday, unemployment and crime will be less and the housing problem nearer a solution two years from now? I bet my last halfpenny that the problems will be worse in 1987. No presentation by the Government will conceal that. The people have tumbled the deceit, the deception and double talk of a Government led by the most superficial woman ever to have been in Parliament. They will not be deluded a third time. The day of reckoning is coming, and the sooner the better.

6.27 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): I wish at the outset to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on having continued to make the reduction of inflation his first priority. It is the only basis from which sustained growth can develop. I join others in congratulating him also on the remarkable correlation that he has achieved between our growth levels and the rate of inflation that we hope to achieve during the next few months.

That is a good prospect, but I see on the horizon a cloud a little larger than a man's hand. The real threat to the growth that we hope to achieve comes from the rise in our

[Mr. Julian Amery]

unit labour costs and general wage settlements. Earnings in our manufacturing industry during the past 12 months rose by 9·5 per cent., while those of our main competitors rose between only 2·5 and 4 per cent., with the exception of France, which is not the most efficient member of the class, where they rose by 6 per cent.

Our unit labour costs in manufacturing in the second quarter of last year rose by 6·8 per cent., and in July by 7·9 per cent., while our competitors endured rises of 2 per cent. or less. If we continue to carry that handicap, can British industry hope to compete either in the export market or against imports? If we cannot compete, can we avoid a serious setback in the last quarter of next year involving a check in growth, a rise in unemployment and, conceivably, even the renewal of rising inflation?

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer saw all this clearly in his speech at the Café Royal the other day. He exhorted industrialists not to cut wages but to keep down the rise in wages to about the level of the competition that we face. Will his exhortations succeed? Will he even succeed in the public sector in achieving a lesser rise? It is interesting to remember that a 1 per cent. rise in public sector wage settlements costs about £400 million.

If the Chancellor cannot succeed by exhortation to persuade industry and the public sector to do as they should in economic terms, can he avoid bailing out industry and the economy by reducing interest rates and leaving it to the market to judge what the exchange rate should be? To bail out industry in that way is not right by sound economic principles, but can he avoid it? Can we avoid the reality where, if we do not intend to have a statutory incomes policy and if we leave it to market forces, the only alternative may be to reduce the exchange rate by reducing interest rates?

I can understand why my right hon. Friend has so far set his face against that. He sees in a strong currency protection against a renewal of inflation. In that he is right. He believes that high interest rates will hold up the currency and help to contain the money supply. That is true. He may also see in high interest rates and a high exchange rate a means of compelling industry to take a more realistic approach to wage settlements. But suppose it does not. Is there any alternative to contemplating what some might call a more realistic exchange rate for sterling? I am not saying that he has to act now, but much damage has been done in the past 18 to 12 months. Our costs have become very distorted compared with those of our competitors.

I hope that in all this the Chancellor will not be unduly influenced by the summit meeting of Finance Ministers or by any obligation to bring down the dollar. Of course, we have to avoid protectionist tendencies in the United States Congress, but no action taken by the reserve banks, unless carefully concerted, will have any influence. Will it even then? So far Germany and Japan have said that they are not obliged to bring down their interest rates. I am not sure how far the Federal Reserve Bank has moved. Anyway, are central bank resources adequate to influence markets in a world where the Euro market deposits alone total nearly $2·5 trillion dollars?

The first priority is not to check protectionist tendencies in the United States but to prevent a position where growth is checked here and unemployment goes up again. Of course, industry should do the job for itself. The crisis is not of the Government's making, but at the end of the day the buck stops with my right hon. Friend.

6.34 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Yes, the buck certainly stops with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I was particularly grateful for the speech of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). As he went on, we noted the discomfiture of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who has been compelled to accept the first instalment of the pragmatism urged by the right hon. Gentleman over so many years. I was only sorry that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) was not here. We have in the House several interesting antagonisms which lend colour to our debates. It is a pity that the full colour was not shown on this occasion.

In the early days the Government stated that our problems stemmed from public expenditure and that control of the money supply would solve the problem of inflation. Those were the glorious days of early youth of the Government. We have had sterling M3 in double figures every year since then, but the Government continued with their dogma until a couple of months ago. Admittedly the dogma had started to get ragged at the edges but it still continued. At last within the past few months they have repented. I only wish that the academics who took up political positions would likewise repent. It is not for academics to take up a political stand and they too should admit their error.

The Government sought to run the economy on automatic pilot. The automatic pilot had a basic fault in that it was nonsense. Now the Government are running on the principle of the exchange rate. All Governments to a certain extent run the economy on the assumption of a certain exchange rate. What is different is that this Government have always proclaimed neutrality.

When the dollar-sterling exchange rate exceeded 2·40 they did nothing. When it fell to nearly parity with the dollar they realised finally that the nonsense had to stop. That was the turning point, the moment when truth broke in upon the convoluted theories which monetarism had become. So M0, M1, M2, PS11, PS12, M3 and sterling M3 all collapsed and were replaced by the simple single standard of the exchange rate as the prime determinant of economic policy. That is to be between 80 and 81 against the old Smithsonian level. That is what determines the interest rates, the success or failure of manufacturing industry, the level of inflation and the Government's economic policy.

I have nothing against using the exchange rate as a prime determinant of economic policy. I welcome the move to realism, although I wish it had come earlier. What concerns me is that the exchange rate should be fixed in relation to the needs of industry rather than to the needs of the Government. The needs of the Government are to retain the one success they claim, reducing inflation. After all these years we are back to the pre-1967 position of defending the pound. We are enduring great economic and industrial privations just for that. For the Government, the important aim is a strong pound. A strong pound means that imports are cheap and the cost of living remains artificially low. It also has the important consequence that it is of benefit to the City of London and hence to the south-east, even though it causes great damage to the rest of the country.

As evidence I can cite no better organisation than the Manchester chamber of commerce and industry which describes the position as it is. It does not talk about money supply or any nonsense like that. It tells us what order books are like and about sales and output. It is to be commended for that purpose. Perhaps I should declare an interest: I am an ex-officio member of it. It says:

"The results of the latest quarterly survey of manufacturing industry indicate a significant fall in orders and deliveries for both home and export markets."

That is very sad:

"The decline in exports has been especially sharp, and must be attributable to an overvalued exchange rate against key European currencies, such as the Deutschemark. It is therefore not surprising that the data highlight a substantial increase in the percentage of respondents requiring a lower exchange rate for improving business prospects. Measures are needed now if the disasters of 1979-81, characterised by high interest rates and an overvalued exchange rate, are not to be repeated . . . Over four years ago the Manchester Chamber warned that manufacturing industry, and the region's industrial base, was being eroded by the damaging effect of an overvalued exchange rate and high interest rates."

That is not the message from the City of London, which has the enormous advantage of being close at hand and having people who understand Whitehall completely, know which Minister to go to, and how to put their points. It is the message of those who deal with the world as it is and face the commercial and industrial realities.

Mr. Grylls: I have been following the right hon. Gentleman's arguments about the exchange rate and its effect on industry and inflation, but will he recognise that for business the most damaging single thing is when inflation gets out of control? That destroys more businesses than any other measure. When the right hon. Gentleman says that inflation is important only for the Government, that is surely nonsense. It is crucial for the survival of British industry and commerce as a whole.

Mr. Sheldon: Nobody can doubt that inflation is important, but we are not talking about hyper-inflation. We are talking about those who represent commerce and industry in the regions, who have a proper understanding of what it means to them, and who understand that political factors are not their concern.

When Sir Terence Beckett talked about a bare-knuckle fight, and thought he was speaking for industry, he found that he was speaking also on behalf of those who were politically interested, and that some of their political interests even overrode their commercial and industrial interest. The Manchester Chamber of Commerce and Industry talks about things as they are, and that is its particular value.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer is selling off £5 billion worth of assets that belong to the people of Britain. Some of them are monopolies. The Chancellor will be transferring a public monopoly and creating to some extent a private monopoly over which he will have less control. Even more, he will be selling capital assets to spend in consumption. The Chancellor of the Exchequer asks what is wrong with consumption. The answer is nothing, as long as the money to buy that consumption is earned.

We are consuming at present the windfall of North sea oil. To that must now be added the regular consumption of our capital assets. It is only a quirk in our accounting arrangements that counts sales of Government property as negative public expenditure. So long as that was limited to small sales, such an eccentricity in our system of Government accounting did not much matter. It is an error to transfer capital to consumption in so profligate a way.

I can understand the ideology of privatisation, although I strongly oppose it. If the Government sold public assets but ensured that the proceeds went into investment, whether in the infrastructure or elsewhere, the charge of profligacy could be avoided. What they are doing allows of no defence. We are seeing the decline of ideology. Privatisation was seen at one time as the triumph of private enterprise over public enterprise. It fitted in with all the beliefs that owed their origin more to speeches at Tory party conferences than to reflection and consideration. The new version of privatisation means much more in terms of increasing consumption by means of tax reductions than removing the state from the ownership of public enterprise. But another matter that concerns me is the price at which those assets are being sold.

When the sales were counted in tens or maybe even hundreds of millions of pounds, the cost to the taxpayer and to the nation was limited if the price obtained was too low. When we are talking of thousands of millions of pounds, the matter becomes much more serious.

Every year the Treasury, through the Government broker, sells billions of pounds of Government stock. The price is finally pitched and stock is released in amounts to maximise the price eventually paid to the Treasury. As a Treasury Minister I visited the Government broker—as I suppose many other Treasury Ministers have in the past, and still do today—to satisfy myself that the sales of stock were being efficiently managed to produce the best deal for the taxpayer.

In the years from 1980 to 1984, the Government's annual sales of marketable securities were £12 billion, £4 billion, £4 billion, £11 billion and £11 billion. Those figures are not all that dissimilar to the sums of money now being raised by privatisation.

It is interesting to look at the 50 issues a year of Government and Government-guaranteed marketable securities, at £100 million or £200 million every week or so. We are now in the same league as that of the Government broker selling Government stock in having to sell off our national assets. It is no less important for the sales of Government assets to be managed so that the Government obtain the proper price, in just the same way as they try desperately to obtain the proper price for the securities that they sell on the open market.

What worries many who have at heart the proper control of public finance is the fact that the Government are in such a hurry to sell off so much in so short a time, and that they are not being nearly as scrupulous as they should be in those sales. We must call for a less hurried approach. If they have to sell, it should be done in tranches so that the price can be pitched at a level that is acceptable to the British public who do not share the Government's ideology. The control of public finance is a crucial matter and should be of importance to everybody in the Treasury and the Government.

My final point concerns the appointment of Lord Young as the Secretary of State for Employment. Problems always arise when a Minister is not a member of this House. There are democratic arguments as well as practical arguments concerning exposure to the views of elected members. I am principally concerned at the relative security that such a Minister has in facing the polite comments in the other place in contrast to the

[Mr. Sheldon]

probing, searching and sometimes angry questions on unemployment which can be put by Members of this House, representing and expressing the views acquired by them in meeting their constituents. It is very easy for a Minister to impress the House of Lords. It is much harder to do the same in this Chamber.

I have always held that one of the reasons for the selection of Lord Home as Prime Minister, in preference to the far wider choice available in 1963, was that Lord Home would not have to face the pointed, direct and necessary criticisms that this House offers.

A Minister with such an important portfolio and responsibility, and who is directly concerned with unemployment, should be answerable to this House. It is no solution to offer this House a substitute, however able he may be, who informs the Secretary of State indirectly of the feelings of this House. Responsibility at one remove is not responsibility at all. The House should express itself collectively on matters such as this. It has done so in the past; it ought to do so again.

6.49 pm

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). Perhaps I might return in a few moments to his point about privatisation.

I listened with interest to the speech of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). As far as I could gather, he was advocating the same policy for today's conditions as was advocated by his own Government who, I remind the House, ended with a bank rate of some 17 per cent. and a visit to the International Monetary Fund, with the IMF determining what our economic policy should be. It seems surprising that after all these years the right hon. Gentleman has not even learnt that lesson — nor indeed the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), who was a member of the same Government.

Most Conservative Members welcome the mention in the Queen's Speech of a reduction in taxation. The autumn statement, issued yesterday, will also be generally welcomed, though not by the prophets of gloom and doom. Opposition Members had great difficulty in attacking it. It seems that they relish only the bad news. The fact that the autumn statement showed how buoyant the economy was and what could happen with continued growth did not please them, so they picked on privatisation.

A Member of another Opposition party accused us of a U-turn. In his Budget statement of March this year, the Chancellor said that total Government expenditure for the next year would be £139 billion. In his autumn statement he said precisely that. So there has been no increase in public expenditure, although it is true that within the £139 billion there has been a reallocation of resources. I remind the House, however, that in that amount some £24 billion is allocated to capital projects. When the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) spoke about the amount going to housing, he sneeringly said that only £220 million was to be allocated to the housing programme next year. That is nowhere near the truth. That amount is in addition to the £3 billion being spent on housing next year. So the housing allocation for next year is some £3·25 billion, very different from the £220 million that he mentioned.

We can take some comfort in the fact that the Chancellor pointed out—and it is quite obvious from the autumn statement — that we now have the lowest borrowing requirement since 1971-72, and that we shall have the lowest proportion of public expenditure for gross domestic product since 1972-73. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) took pleasure in that, and I do not blame him. I was in the House at the same time as he was in 1971-72 and, 13 or 14 years later, we have just got back to that. I remind the House that in the meantime we have had quite a severe recession. We can take pride in having come out of that and in the fact that the economy is so buoyant at the moment.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup also mentioned overseas aid. We ought to nail the lie on overseas aid. In this coming year £1,187 million of British taxpayers' money will go on overseas aid, in addition to investment by the private sector. The Government are accused of not meeting the United Nations target. Who determined the United Nations target? It was mainly those countries which receive aid. Obviously, they will pitch their demands or targets high.

Of course, the Third world needs more investment. Here the World Bank and the IMF could do a good job of work. One aspect of overseas investments to which not many Governments have paid sufficient attention is the security of those investments. If one has an investment overseas, there is very little one can do about it. If the overseas Government want to expropriate it, there are no sanctions that the investor can impose. What we could do, through the IMF and the World Bank, is to give an assurance to new investors in the Third world that if their assets or profits were confiscated the guarantee of the World Bank and the IMF would operate. This would give confidence for more investment. The Third world countries cannot continue merely to take cash and food from Western democracies. They must look at their own structures and their own environment to see how they can grow their own food. This is something to which we must pay attention.

On the question of taxation, there is a strong rumour that the Government have made up their minds to reduce the standard rate. I hope that the rumour is absolutely baseless. It is true that we have reduced the standard rate from 33p to 30p in the pound, a welcome reduction. If we were to reduce it from 30p to 29p, that would cost the Exchequer some £1,200 million. To reduce the standard rate by 1p is nothing, however. In order to mean anything, it must be a substantial reduction. A reduction of 5p would cost the Exchequer something in the order of £6 billion.

If the Chancellor has £6 billion over the next few years, would it be wise to reduce the standard rate from 30p to 25p, or would it be better to look at the thresholds? Indexing the thresholds for next year, a married man will start paying tax when he earns £70 a week. When one considers that the national average wage is well over £170 a week, it is ludicrous to start paying tax at £70 a week. If indeed we had £6 billion with which to relieve taxation over the next two years, it would surely be much better to increase the thresholds by some 30 per cent. That would bring a married man up to, say, £91 a week. It would be a definite help to the low paid. I hope that the Treasury Bench will take this message, that thresholds are extremely important and must be tackled.

Everyone welcomes the fact that for long-term unemployed persons there is to be a pilot scheme of an extra £20 a week, so that if a person who has been unemployed for a year or more takes a low-paid job he will be given an allowance of £20 a week for six months. But let us look at that. Suppose that a man has been unemployed for just over a year. He takes a low-paid job at £70 a week. With his £20 a week allowance, he is up to £90 a week and at that figure he is subjected to tax at 30 per cent. on the difference between £70 and £90. Of the £20, he has to pay £6 back. How stupid can we get? It would be much better to tackle the threshold so as to take such a person out of the tax bracket altogether. I would like to see the tax brackets much nearer the national average wage than they are at the moment.

The Government's privatisation proposals have been castigated by many Opposition Members and by some of my right hon. and hon. Friends too. It is all very well for people to say that assets such as British Rail, British Airways or the British Airports Authority belong to the general public, but it is absolute rubbish to tell our constituents that they have a share in such organisations. Such organisations are owned by the state.

If one looks at our record on privatisation — the National Freight Corporation, Cable and Wireless and all the rest — one will see that the profitability of those organisations has gone up enormously. The National Freight Corporation was a loss leader year after year, but it is now extremely profitable, and that in itself is of advantage to the economy. The National Freight Corporation now pays dividends, whereas previously it did not know what dividends were. It also makes profits, and that increases the revenue to the Exchequer. That is a good thing.

There are still the siren voices of those who want to increase public expenditure, but the cold fact is that even next year we as a nation will be overspending by £8,000 million. Further increases in expenditure will mean that the Chancellor must tax, borrow or print more money. We have been down that road, and it is clear that all of them fuel inflation.

As in the past, the scourge of the economy is inflation, which erodes the wealth of any country or individual. I hope that the Chancellor will turn a deaf ear to the siren voices who want him to increase public expenditure. I am absolutely convinced that we must stick to the policy that we have had since 1979. That is the only direction in which success lies.

7.3 pm

Mr. Stan Thorne (Preston): As well as the Queen's Speech, the debate now includes the two statements that were made yesterday. I and many Opposition Members are far from convinced that our economy, industry and employment will radically improve—if they improve at all—as a consequence of the plans announced yesterday by the Chancellor and the Paymaster General. Those statements contained no real economic initiatives from which real jobs will emerge. Unhappily, the same is true of the Gracious Speech.

We have record dole queues, and young people face a continuous dilemma, particularly on Merseyside where I live, and in the north-west generally. For example, my own son-in-law has not worked for six years. Like many others who live in that area, I am therefore well aware of the real problems that we face.

Economic planning to reduce unemployment is the major priority, but we shall not achieve that by the example to which I shall now refer. British Rail Engineering Ltd. employs 25,300 people, but over the past four years 11,200 BREL jobs have been lost. The management is presently planning to close the Swindon works in March 1986, which will mean 2,263 redundancies, and is now running down its Glasgow works, which will mean a further 1,171 redundancies.

The main line locomotive renewal programme for 1985 to 2009 envisages 1,000 units and an expenditure of £900 million, yet it is planned that Sweden's ASEA be invited to compete to supply electric and the United States be invited to compete to supply diesel. We should ensure that British Rail Engineering Ltd. produces the engines for the late 1990s and early 21st century. The skill clearly exists within the present workforce, and in my view there is no justification whatsoever for inviting those foreign tenders.

Not long ago, when I had a couple of hours to spare, I walked around the streets of Paris and took the trouble to count the number of motor cars made in Britain. I found three. The rest were made in France, Germany, Italy or Japan. It is clear that the open, free market exists in Britain, given the number of foreign vehicles that come in, but the same does not apply in other parts of Europe.

In my own constituency at present, 18,452 people are looking for work in the Preston travel-to-work area. In the north-west region, 16·3 per cent. of the work force are looking for a job. The Manchester chamber of commerce has referred to the over-valued exchange rate, high interest rates and a lack of confidence among the business community, and, as has already been mentioned, the ABCC report entitled "British Manufacturing Decline 1975-1984" refers to a balance of payments deficit on manufactures in 1984 of nearly £4 billion. That is for a country which was once described as the workshop of the world.

Do we improve industrial prospects by selling off public assets such as British Telecom, British Aerospace and British Gas? Do we really contemplate selling off the electricity industry, parts of British Rail and the profitable coal mines that exist in Britain? On the contrary, we must diminish the sale of such assets. Like other Opposition Members, I am opposed to the stripping of our public assets.

We should be seeking to restore Britain's crippled manufacturing base. Inner city squalor should be a main line of attack. Virtually every day the financial pages of the media refer to millions of pounds involved in takeover bids and to foreign money coming into Britain while British money seeks a more favourable profit overseas. I appreciate why shareowners seek the best profits, but they do not seem to have regard to what is best for Britain.

We recently celebrated Remembrance Sunday, when we remembered those who laid down their lives in the last war in order to protect Britain. It is clear that we should not expect the wealthy to consider the children of those who fell, because narrow self-interest dictates the policy of the wealthy and the policy of the Government.

Why cannot Britain's immense wealth be used to build decent homes, to extend the National Health Service, to improve the provisions for the disabled and the elderly and to ensure that educational opportunities are provided not just for the five-year-olds but for the 55-year-olds? Why have our industries not developed the drive to meet people's needs? Why has there been no major investment

[Mr. Stan Thorne]

to overcome starvation and premature death in the Third world? All these activities, and many more, would create hundreds of thousands of jobs. Why are we not engaging in them? We have not done so in recent years because in Britain private profit is the motivating force.

Conservative Members probably attended church services last Sunday and had the temerity to participate in Christian worship, but I wonder how many of them considered the real message of Jesus Christ.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Oh, come off it!

Mr. Thorne: I understand why the hon. Gentleman says, "Come off it." He will not look at the message that Jesus Christ gave, because it is the complete antithesis of the policies, ideology and philosophy of Conservative Members. I do not claim not to be a Christian, but it sticks in my craw when those who claim to be Christians reject in real life the teachings of Jesus Christ. They do so in the cause of private profit.

Regrettably, the Gracious Speech is virtually irrelevant to the crisis that faces 8 million British people and it underlines the need at the earliest opportunity to replace this Government with a Labour Government who are committed to democratic Socialism.

7.12 pm

Mr. Francis Pym (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Preston (Mr. Thorne), because I hope to touch on some of the points to which he referred.

I thought that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was in poor order this afternoon. He was a poor advocate for the Opposition's amendment. He was long on criticism and absolutely void on a constructive alternative. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave a characteristically robust reply, although I noticed that he studiously avoided any reference to the autumn statement and the pragmatism that it so clearly and sensibly implied.

I welcome the Gracious Speech and, perhaps just as much, the three or four statements that have been made since then. They show that there is still plenty of life and energy left in this Government, which is just as well, because they have plenty of work still to do. I want to suggest to the House some additional strands which should be added to their strategy. Despite many advances in six years, many problems still remain, to which I shall turn later. I very much commend the Government for what they are trying to achieve in Northern Ireland. Although the House does not yet know the full details, I hope that success will attend their endeavours.

I have only two points of dissent with the Gracious Speech. The first relates to the time scale in which it is proposed to provide private funding for agricultural research. I support the principle of the industry providing some of this funding, but the speed with which the Government want the industry to do it means that a sensible transition cannot take place. Research may be damaged as a result. My second point of dissent relates to shop opening hours, but I shall not develop that argument tonight.

Since the Gracious Speech a year ago, there have been many gains, some of which were referred to this afternoon by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. There has been a healthy level of economic growth in the last year. There has even been some growth in manufacturing industry and in the number of people employed, and we have inflation under control. But, more important than all that, we have defeated the miners' strike. That is very much to the personal credit of the Prime Minister, among others. I support entirely the stand that she took on sanctions against South Africa and the arguments that she used on that issue.

None of these achievements has been lightly gained and none of them is lightly to be dismissed. However, other disturbing features of our economy and society exict alongside the achievements. They are not lightly to be dismissed, either. The first is the huge scale and duration of unemployment, about which I have been speaking for four or five years. As the expanded youth training scheme takes effect, there will be a reduction in the unemployment figures. I hope that the Government will not be tempted to treat this as in any sense a victory. The youth training scheme is absolutely right, because training is crucial to our recovery, but it does not represent solid new jobs. The fact is that, despite recent growth and six and half years of a sustained economic policy, there is, as yet, no sign that the creation of secure new employment on a sufficient scale is even on the horizon.

As for the inner city riots, I condemn their violence, as do all my hon. Friends, and, I believe, all hon. Members. I agree with the Government that unemployment was not the direct cause of the riots. No one factor was the direct cause. It is one thing to say that unemployment and related factors did not cause the riots, but quite another to say that those factors are irrelevant. Among the reasons are boredom—the boredom of having nothing to do and no money with which to do it—and a future which looks pretty bleak. I think that most of us take the view that if there were better homes in which to live and better prospects for jobs, riots would be much less likely.

An analysis of our economy is described in the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade. I wish that Ministers had not reacted so hastily and in so hostile a fashion to that report. It contained well-informed and constructive criticism but also conclusions and recommendations that reinforced the Government's belief about the economy. It referred to the need for a change in the national attitude, to the vital importance of manufacturing and trade, to the need for this to be recognised in our education system and to the need for greater industrial competitiveness—all the things which the Government have been exhorting us to do for years.

The Select Committee report echoes what I and a number of my hon. Friends have been saying for some time: that manufacturing industry has suffered a major decline and that there has been a loss of competitiveness. Both these facts are a threat to our future. We have been giving serious warnings about that future, inspired by a passionate desire that our country should be prosperous in the long term. Urgent corrective action is essential if we are to remain true to our history and if we are to retain international influence.

By rubbishing the report, and by rubbishing the same analysis when made by me and by others, the Government give the impression not only of rejecting our remedies but of wishing to turn their back on the factual evidence upon which it is based. Even if the reality proves to be only half

as bad as the report envisages or as I have expressed it on other occasions, the problems remain very great and they will not go away. They must be faced.

In my view, such a situation requires a mixture of consolidation and radicalism. I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is to reply, because he is portrayed as the captain of the consolidators. There is much to be consolidated: success in containing inflation, success in bringing responsibility to industrial relations, success in transferring state monopolies to private enterprise. But one cannot consolidate 3·5 million unemployed people; nor can one consolidate bad housing, or the decline in international competitiveness, or the breathing space that has been afforded us by North sea oil, especially when there is no sign of anything to replace it.

Consolidation is not an option. Events move forward and our responsibility is to anticipate those events and prepare for them. If that requires radical action, let there be radical action. It is not a question of the Government turning back or standing still. I do not suggest that the Government do either. The question is: in which direction should the Government move forward? I do not want to see the Government's approach abandoned. I want to see it broadened, and I am glad if that is what we are now beginning to get.

There are already some encouraging adjustments. We have seen the great demise of M3. I admire the Chancellor of the Exchequer for his daring in burying that idol of the monetarists' faith in the glare of the lights of the Mansion house. I do not think that even the deputy chairman of the Conservative party has thought of anything as brazen as that.

Following on from that is the looser fiscal stance, the less rigid finance policy that many of us have been advocating. The autumn statement showed that. My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) referred to the adherence to the public expenditure total of £139 billion, but it was clear yesterday that the Chancellor was talking about spending more money.

There is a great deal more enthusiasm for a regional policy, which I have long advocated. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry made that clear at the party conference, and in a recent speech the Paymaster General did the same. I hope that they will look at regional policy in the context of the completely different needs and requirements of the regions in decline and the regions where there is expansion.

An encouraging sign last summer was when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that if current policies failed to create new jobs, new policies would be introduced. Those policies did not produce enough new jobs and new policies are now beginning to be introduced. That is extremely welcome, and I congratulate my right hon. Friends on that. However, I want to encourage them to go further, act more boldly and think beyond short-term policies to longer-term objectives.

The approach that I favour includes two basic elements. First, the Government must unswervingly maintain their commitment to industrial regeneration, greater competitiveness, increased modernisation and investment and the spirit of free enterprise. Secondly, they must offer more to the casualties of that process. They number more than 3·25 million when one includes their families. Many of them — not all — need better housing. There is certainly a need for better training, a better life and a lot more hope. Those are the basic elements in the approach, but I should like to see it go much further.

First, in view of the present levels of unemployment and the fact that more jobs will be lost if industry becomes more efficient, which it certainly needs to, the Government must take more direct action than they are at the moment to promote new employment. They should play a part in providing a proper industrial strategy and generate the finance to sustain it. By "industrial strategy" I do not mean the lowest common denominator of Government, management and unions. A fudge like that is worse than useless. I mean a partnership in which each party plays its proper role. The Government for their part must play a supportive and co-ordinating role, providing response to foreign competition. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) produced a good example in the overseas contracts that he referred to. That form of partnership is practised extremely successfully by some of our overseas competitors, and I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the new Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will provide it.

Secondly, I want to see a sustained programme of public works concentrating mainly on housing and the inner cities. That programme started modestly yesterday. I welcome it, and look forward to seeing it extended. That programme should address not only the quality of housing but mobility within the housing market, and should therefore tackle the thorny question of rent control, because mobility of labour will be very important for the revival of our economy.

Thirdly, I want to see more emphasis on research, not less. That has been one of our national success stories. It has kept us as world leaders in several areas. I want to maintain that. We are a nation of inventors, and the Government made a cut, which I believe is a strategic mistake. I am delighted that yesterday the Chancellor of the Exchequer restored £20 million to the research programme, but that does not make good the reductions that were previously made. Already there are reports that the brain drain has started again. I cannot think of anything more stupid for this country than to allow that to happen. I want to see an increase in the emphasis on research.

Fourthly, I should like to see a complete overhaul of the tax and benefit system. I know that the Government are working on that, but we do not yet know how far they intend to go. There needs to be a unified system to ensure a decent standard of living for everyone, and at the same time to provide a permanent incentive to work. Elsewhere I have advocated the basic income scheme. I shall not dwell on it tonight, but I want to draw a distinction between it and the national minimum wage favoured by the Labour party. It amazes me that the Labour party fails to appreciate the folly of the national minimum wage, which imposes on employers certain wage levels irrespective of conditions, therefore certainly giving rise to increased unemployment and a lack of competitiveness. The minimum income guarantee scheme is quite different.

Finally, we must tackle the future of our public services, particularly education and the National Health Service. We need to separate the economic objective from the social objective. The social objective is to improve standards of care, to improve the service. The economic objective is to provide that service and care as cost effectively as possible. If that can best be achieved through privatisation, as far as I am concerned, there is no

[Mr. Francis Pym]

argument whatsoever against it, provided that the social objective remains intact. Some time ago, I recommended that there should be a pilot scheme in one of the regions. I still think that there is some merit in that.

That balance between economic and social objectives, and the distinction between the two, is the central feature of the approach that I have been recommending to the House tonight. We must become more efficient economically and more competitive industrially, but that process has caused and will cause social hardship, which often applies to people in an arbitrary and unfair way. Therefore, we must alleviate that effect by promoting new employment, ensuring decent living standards and improving housing conditions, health care and education.

Whether it is too much to call such a broadened approach a "new deal" is a matter of opinion. I prefer that description to "new agenda", which my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) used the other day. After all that has happened in the past six years, there is a need for a new deal. That stage has been reached in the life of the Government. I hope that the statements yesterday heralded the beginning of it. If they did, the Government must not pretend to be doing something different.

I think that people would welcome such a new deal and are ready for it, and I see enormous political advantage in it. It can be funded out of privatisation and would be seen as a reinvestment of national assets, which is understandable and acceptable to people. That use of those resources is preferable to tax cuts. I agreed with what my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South said about raising the threshold.

At any rate, such an approach is radical. It is in keeping with the Government's own committed objectives. It is also in keeping with historic Tory principles and practice. I think that it would appeal to the common sense and fairness of the British people and give a positive sense of direction and progress. I think that that is what people want, and the time for it is now.

7.29 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): The right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) has clearly outlined the vision of the future of those in the Conservative party who have been described as the Centre Forwards or the wets. I describe them as those who seek to go back, within reason, to the middle-road policies of a previous Conservative Prime Minister, Lord Stockton. Not all the right hon. Gentleman's ideas appeal to me, but they are certainly a jolly sight better than anything I have heard from the Government Front Bench in the past few years.

It is not sufficient to return to Keynesian-type policies because of the character of the present deep, capitalist crisis which will not be easy to get out of. Keynesianism is not the answer. There are people, even in the Labour party, who believe that reverting to Keynesianism and straightforward interventionist policies can solve the problem. I do not agree, but such policies are better than anything suggested by those arguing for the straightforward monetarist policies that have led to our terrible crisis.

I agree with those who say that Thatcherism is not responsible for all of our faults. We live in a capitalist society and capitalism is responsible. Thatcherism is a form of capitalism that has made the crisis deeper and worse than it might have been. That is why we have higher levels of unemployment than the rest of Europe, the United States of America and other countries that are also suffering from the crisis of capitalism.

We must understand the nature of the crisis. It has occurred for many reasons, one of which cannot be avoided — we are living through a second industrial revolution. The first industrial revolution created all manner of problems. As a boy I sat at the feet of the old Socialist economists who explained to me that the solution to the problems of the industrial revolution created by capitalism was a planned Socialist economy. If such an economy was important during the first industrial revolution, my God, how much more important it is now during the second. The Government's policies are not the only reason for the crisis, although they have made it worse.

When I first came to the House we had a Labour Government. The docks in Liverpool, London, Bristol and Glasgow were working. They declined over a long period.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): That was the dockers' fault.

Mr. Heffer: The hon. Gentleman does not understand what I am talking about. Perhaps he should leave the Chamber.

The docks declined for many reasons. We no longer had a great empire, patterns of trade changed and there were new technological developments inside the docks industry. Now, granaries in the Liverpool docks are worked by five or six people, when before they were worked by hundreds. This raises fundamental questions that I never hear asked when I come here. Indeed, no answers are even suggested. Keynesianism will not solve that. Thousands of workers could be put back to work immediately if there were programmes for house building, road building, rail building, and sewerage repair. All that is important and we need it, but, having got it, we would still be faced with technological advances and the fact that we do not have a proper distribution of wealth because production is for profit rather than for use.

It does not matter whether we talk of going into the European monetary system and about the snake. They all try to achieve a balance in the exising system, and it is the system that is wrong. We must consider building a new society. It would give us entirely different attitudes to employment, the distribution of wealth and public and private ownership. We must look at things differently. It is time that the country faced up to that.

Yesterday, the Paymaster General rubbished my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and quoted a pamphlet that my hon. Friend has written. The best part of the Paymaster General's speech were his quotations from that pamphlet—the rest can be forgotten. They were important quotations because they concerned planning resources and developing social ownership.

I could describe Liverpool's unemployment, but everybody knows about the crisis there and about poverty, misery and the horror of living in a society in which neither the old nor the young have any hope of employment. We cannot continue in that way, but change requires a fundamental approach.

My right hon. and hon. Friends should not be ashamed that, in our party's constitution, we have something called

clause four and that we believe in Socialism. The Prime Minister believes in her principles of free enterprise and a capitalist system. She fights for those principles—rightly, as that is what she believes in. She does not care about what happens to people or about the fact that they become poor. She has no compassion for them. If she believes that, we should not be ashamed of believing that only Socialism is the answer to the country's problems — Socialist planning, Socialist ownership, democratic——

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen) *rose*——

Mr. Heffer: I should just like to conclude.

I emphasise the word "democratic". I do not believe in the great bureaucratic system that exists in the Soviet Union and in eastern Europe. I do not want to see a lack of freedom because freedom is right. It consists not only of freedom of speech, which is essential, but the freedom to have a job and a decent home. Freedom has many sides and we must fight for it. Equally, we must fight for the freedom of thought and ideas and to express our views without being put into prison or a gulag for doing so. That is what democratic Socialism is all about and democratic Socialism is necessary if we are to begin to deal with the problems of unemployment in this country.

7.42 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) said that I know nothing about the docks. I come from Hull and served on the city council there, was chairman of the finance committee and leader of the county council, and I saw my town destroyed by the dockers. With the advent of the EEC, we had every chance to take the trade that was coming from the west to the east and so become the Europort of Europe. Due to the bloody-mindedness of the Hull dockers, with their perpetual strikes and demarcation disputes, we lost that opportunity and the trade and investment went to Felixstowe, where the dockers hardly ever go on strike and there was no dead hand of the national dock labour board. After that, the hon. Member for Walton cannot tell me that I know nothing about the dockers who destroyed my city.

I strongly welcome the passage in the Gracious Speech which states:

"Firm control of public expenditure will be maintained, with a view to diminishing its share of overall national output and facilitating further reductions in the burden of income tax."

That statement gives the impression that the Government have at last got public expenditure under control. Although we continuously hear the Opposition talking about cuts in spending, we all know that there have been no overall cuts in total spending. Each year, departmental spending has risen remorselessly and the forecast given last January in the Government's expenditure plans for 1985-86 and 1987-88 has been exceeded by more than £2 billion in the current year. Since the Government came to power, expenditure in real terms has risen on average by 2 per cent. per annum. That increase in expenditure has been somewhat disguised by the Government's creative accounting—by which I mean the practice of showing asset sales and receipts from privatisation as a reduction in public spending. I shall not repeat the arguments showing that that is wrong, as they have been made often in reports from the Treasury Select Committee. I merely point out that this year, once again, Government spending has increased and the Government would not have been able to get their figures within the planning totals if they had not doubled the estimated receipts from privatisation.

I support the policy of privatisation for its own sake, but not as a basis for increasing Government spending or for reducing taxation. In the long term, that could prove to be a very dangerous policy. First, it allows the establishment of spending patterns which are long-term but which are met by income that is essentially non-recurring. I was heartened to hear the Chancellor say that the present assets held in the public sector would enable asset sales, by my calculations, to go on for about 15 years, though I hardly believe that the Government intend to sell the lot.

Secondly, such a policy is dangerous because it puts off the day when cutting Government expenditure will be essential, due to the decline of oil revenues, if we are to avoid significant increases in taxation. As a traditional accountant, I should have liked to see a significant part of those resources used to pay off the national debt and thus reduce the burden of interest in future years to offset the reduction in North sea oil revenue.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): The best way to reduce the national debt is to reduce it as a percentage of national wealth. The Government should be investing in British industry — not in Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea, like so many of their friends —to restore the British economy so that more wealth is created. The burden of the national debt would then decrease. It cannot be dealt with merely by taking sums of money out of the Exchequer or raiding the silver, as Lord Stockton called it, to bring down the actual figure of the national debt. It must be reduced as a percentage of national wealth. To do that we should be creating more national wealth, not more job losses.

Mr. Townend: With respect, I do not think that the hon. Gentleman knows what he is talking about. If part of the national debt is paid off, the national debt is automatically reduced as a proportion of the national wealth.

I accept that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and Ministers at the Treasury want to reduce public spending, but year after year they have been thwarted in their efforts by the big spending Departments and in particular by the inexorable rise in the cost of the DHSS. I therefore welcome the commitment in the Gracious Speech to bring in a Bill to reform social security, although I am not sure that it will result in significant savings to the Treasury. I warn Ministers that expenditure is likely to run out of control in one area if they are not careful. They are dealing with the board and lodging allowances for young people but not for older people. In tourist towns such as Bridlington, the conversion of hotels to old people's homes is mushrooming at a frightening rate.

One way to reduce the enormous cost of unemployment, which forms one of the major costs of the DHSS, is to reduce the increasing size of the black economy. I believe that the real unemployment level — people drawing benefit who actually want to work—is no more than 2 million and possibly even less.

Mr. Wareing: The hon. Gentleman does not know what he is talking about.

Mr. Townend: If the hon. Gentleman will listen to my argument, he will see why I come to that conclusion. More

[Mr. Townend]

than 790,000 people are registered as unemployed in the south-east. Everyone accepts that the south-east is entirely different from the north, where my constituency is and where we have real unemployment. Of that total, 400,000 are in greater London. I believe that very few people in the south-east and certainly in greater London who are employable, prepared to travel and ready to accept any of the jobs available need be unemployed.

There are thousands of jobs available in central London, especially in the hotel, restaurant and tourist industries. My own daughter found a job within six hours. She walked off the street into a hamburger place and got a job. It was a menial job with anti-social hours and the pay was not high, but it was a job. Many employers in the tourist industry have had so much difficulty filling vacancies that they have brought in thousands of Filipinos, Spaniards, Greeks, Italians and French to man the hotels and restaurants. Some hotels are virtually 100 per cent. manned by Filipinos. There are 250,000 foreigners working in and around London, mainly in the tourist industry, doing jobs that our own people will not do.

Without doubt, many people registered as unemployed in the south-east are working in the black economy and drawing benefit as well, at considerable cost to the Treasury. This is borne out by the fact that more long-term unemployed are registered in the south of England than in the north. That is incredible. Everybody accepts that the north is far more depressed than the south of England. The only reason, of course, is that there are more long-term jobs in the black economy in the south.

Some people are unemployable because of their lack of motivation or the failure of our education system. Some prefer to live on benefit, subsidising it with part-time work. I regret to say that a growing number supplement their income from the proceeds of petty crime. The Government must address themselves to solving these problems. I welcome the move that I understand the Department is making in the more prosperous areas of the country to return to the practice whereby people who are claiming benefit will lose that benefit if they consistently refuse to take the jobs that are available.

Now that we have a guarantee of a two-year youth training scheme for every young person, benefit should be withdrawn from those under the age of 18. We should increase the incentive to work by reducing income tax. Ideally, that reduction should be financed by spending cuts, but it is so important that I am prepared to support partial financing from the proceeds of privatisation.

Because of the importance of taking people from the black economy back into the white economy, I strongly urge the Government to ensure that the vast majority of any funds available for reductions in tax should go towards progressively lifting the thresholds. Over the next few years, I should like to see a target of progressively taking out of tax everybody earning less than £150 a week.

I welcome the measures to create jobs by deregulation, particularly the proposals in the Gracious Speech to amend the regulations for wages councils. I understand that that change will take young people out of the jurisdiction of wages councils. As all hon. Members know, I have campaigned for many years in this House to have wages councils abolished, and I welcome this as a start. The Government have accepted the proposition that young people should be allowed to price themselves back into work. Why should people over 21 not be allowed to do the same? I find that strange. If deregulation is what we need to stimulate the labour market and open it up, then surely partial deregulation is not as good as full deregulation.

I welcome the radical tone of the Gracious Speech, particularly the privatisation proposals. I was saddened to see that Lord Stockton, a man who was one of my political heroes when I was a young Conservative chairman, a man who was leader of the party and who led the fight against Socialism, and who was strongly opposed to nationalisation, should in extreme old age be extolling the virtues of the public sector. To compare British Airways which has cost the taxpayer so much in recent years with the family silver is, to say the least, eccentric.

For too long, nationalisation has proved to be a dead hand on a large section of British industry. Privatisation is good for the customer, good for the workers and good for the shareholders. My own company recently benefited from the privatisation of British Telecom and the liberalisation that followed. We had an antiquated switchboard and telephones and we let it be known we were proposing to put in a modern system. The price came down and we got a much superior system for half the price and over 10 years we will save £10,000. That is the benefit of privatisation.

The other great advantage is that it enables former nationalised industries to obtain finance without affecting the public sector borrowing requirement. All those people who have been complaining about water authorities putting up the water rates would not need to complain about that if the water authorities were in the private sector and could obtain finance on the market.

There are always omissions that Back Benchers regret from any Gracious Speech, but I congratulate the Government on putting forward a radical policy. I shall support them in the months to come, but I shall continue to encourage them to make savings in public expenditure.

7.55 pm

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): The hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) seemed fairly excited about the control of public expenditure which he said would facilitate further reductions in the burden of income tax, a matter that was referred to in the Queen's Speech. What about the burden of taxation generally? Everyone is carrying a much heavier burden than before because of the steady increase, year by year, in indirect taxation, such as the 100 per cent. increase in value added tax, which no one can avoid.

Reducing the burden of income tax is a monstrous con trick being played by the Chancellor. He knows well enough that 95 per cent. of taxpayers are paying more today than they were paying in 1979 when we left office. We should remember that not all taxpayers are income tax payers. A considerable amount of tax taken by the Treasury is not in the form of income tax. To expect ratepayers in north-east England who over many years have carried the burden of steady losses on Newcastle airport, a municipal airport of which we are extremely proud, to hand over this successful municipal enterprise to private enterprise is, to say the least, a piece of damn cheek in any language. That is what the Government are proposing in the Gracious Speech.

As we all know, the hon. Member for Bridlington is almost fanatical in his hatred of wages councils. Can the Leader of the House tell us just how wicked and depraved

this Government can become? In the Queen's Speech they talk about removing the protection of wages councils from the lower paid in our society. In the main, such people do not enjoy the protection of trade unions, because only a few of them are organised. To suggest such a thing is like stealing from a charity collecting tin. That is about the level of morality of this Government.

I should like to say something about the so-called reform of social security. Why do the Government not come clean and admit that their real purpose is to rob Peter to pay Paul? In this case, Peter represents the poor and needy, and Paul represents those who are already doing very nicely, thank you. On Monday night the *Evening Chronicle* in Newcastle had a leading article entitled "Selling a service." The article said that when family income supplement was introduced the DHSS ran a campaign to make people aware of this new benefit. The city council in Newcastle carried out a survey which showed that fewer than 50 per cent. of the people eligible for family income supplement applied for it. Let us remember that those are people doing a full-time job, but whose earnings are such that they cannot subsist on them. That fact entitles them to claim family income supplement. The city council agreed that £14,000 of ratepayers' money will be spent publicising the rights of people to claim family income supplement.

The editor of the *Evening Chronicle* rightly complained that this should be a Government responsibility. There is something radically wrong when less than half the people entitled to a state benefit are claiming it. That will not be lost on the electors of Tyne Bridge on 5 December, when I am sure that they will give the Tory party in the area a bloody nose. I represented much of Tyne Bridge for 17 years. In one of its wards—Scotswood—more than 70 per cent. of people live on state benefits, including family income supplement.

If ever there was a clear issue of conscience, it is Sunday trading. Will the Leader of the House give an unequivocal undertaking that on the Second Reading of the Sunday trading Bill all hon. Members, including Ministers, will have free votes? It would be monstrous if Ministers were whipped into the Division Lobby to vote against their consciences. Some of my colleagues may disagree with me, but I believe that even Tory Ministers have consciences and the right to act according to their beliefs.

Although I have not yet seen the detailed proposals on police powers, I believe that we would all wish to support them, especially those relating to disorder, drug trafficking and the confiscation of the spoils of drug trafficking. But is it not about time that we had some return on the money that we spend on the police? Let no one forget that the Government must take credit for an enormous increase in expenditure on the police during the past six years. But it is about time that that increase led to better detection. If Joe Bloggs knows that he has a good chance of being apprehended as a result of his villainous activities, he would commit fewer crimes. Indeed, less crime would be committed generally. Burglaries cause a great deal of distress. I speak from the experience of having been burgled no fewer than five times, but the police apprehended the villain in only one case. The Metropolitan police caught the man who burgled my flat in London, but I have regained none of the property that he stole.

Those who know my background of 30 years' employment in the gas industry, private and public, will not be surprised by my following remarks. It is extremely difficult to understand how a Government who are committed to free enterprise and to competition can seriously create a private monopoly in a key energy industry such as gas. I see no evil in a public monopoly that is responsible and answerable to the public through Parliament. But a private monopoly is a horse of a very different colour. It would be accountable only to a few major shareholders. We shall lose safeguards such as the general directives that Ministers can make on behalf of taxpayers. Those major shareholders will be able to make demands of a democratically elected Government to the point of causing policy changes, which would be a negation of democracy. That cannot be right on anyone's terms.

Greater efficiency cannot be part of the Government's case, because the British Gas Corporation has, on any test, surpassed the Government's efficiency targets. The cost to the taxpayer will be astronomical. The corporation is worth about £16 billion, but Treasury-inspired media reports estimate a take of about £8 billion on flotation. Therefore, Joe Public will immediately lose £8,000 million. To add insult to injury, Joe will be asked to pay the City vultures about £300 million to sell him short by £8 billion. But worse is to come. At present, Joe Public looks forward to the Government raking in £1,000 million every year from the British Gas Corporation. That will be gone for ever. We must be in the unique position where Joe Public is being compelled by the Government to pay a group of muggers to inflict grievous bodily harm on him. It can only be described as organised corruption on a massive scale, or at least as economic vandalism.

Last year, the public monopoly spent more than £1,100 million on new and replacement investment, much of which was spent on British goods and services. One of the first acts of the privatised British Telecom was to place major orders for equipment with foreign firms. What guarantee do we have that a privatised British Gas Corporation will not follow the same path?

I suspect that, as in the case of other privatised industries, the financial institutions will corner the lion's share of the industry on flotation or shortly afterwards. But £8,000 million is a massive amount for the markets to find. If many small shareholders are encouraged to buy, there will immediately be a shortage of capital for job-creating investment and a big strain on bank and building society savings. That could lead to an increase in interest rates, mortgage rates and prices, and a consequent increase in unemployment. One side effect of privatisation will be to give the "haves" more and to take from the "have nots".

I have heard it said that employees of the BGC are anxiously awaiting the flotation for their share of the loot —the employees' shares. That may be so, but another consequence for employees will be massive job losses. The closure of gas showrooms has a snowballing effect which could result in the loss of more than 30,000 jobs. A private BGC will have no reason to wish to provide the excellent cover of showroom service at present provided by the nationalised industry, and cross-subsidisation of loss-making showrooms by the profitable ones will be no part of its concern. What about the future of the gas industry employees? The Gas Acts 1948 and 1972 provided for continuing pensions provision. However, if the example of British Telecom, British Airways and the

[Mr. Robert C. Brown]

transport employers on pensions is anything to go by, unless there is statutory provision, we cannot be certain that index-linking will continue for present pensioners, while future pensions policy will be anybody's guess.

The high standards of safety and service established during the past 35 years by the publicly owned gas industry will be put seriously at risk. I am not just crying foul. We have the evidence of British Telecom, which is now charging for emergency repairs of exchange facilities outside normal working hours. If a private gas company adopted a similar policy, would a customer telephone the emergency service during the night or at a weekend to be charged at premium rates? I think not. Such a matter must give the House cause for concern.

There is not much family silver among the people whom I represent, so I shall not weary the House by paraphrasing what was said by the Earl of Stockton, although I do not share the opinion of the hon. Member for Bridlington that Lord Stockton is an eccentric old man. Let me put it into working class parlance. This proposal is as daft as selling all the furniture to take the family to Malta for a two weeks' holiday. Why not do the sensible thing, and drop the measure before it is too late?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I renew Mr. Speaker's appeal for brief contributions. Six right hon. and hon. Members still hope to speak before the winding up speeches, which are expected to begin at about 9.10.

8.10 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Rippon (Hexham): From your position of eminence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will have noticed the increase in rising damp on the Front Bench. This is not a cause for alarm. It is a cause of great satisfaction that views that were heretical a few years ago are now acceptable. I particularly welcome the fact that what I used to call motorway madness—M1, M2 and M3—has been abandoned. Little MO has taken the stage, but will be allowed to remain there only as long as she performs satisfactorily.

Over the past few months we have seen an abandonment of bad monetarism, the rigid, statistical inflexible monetarism that has done the country no good. It is a good thing to see that go. I am also happy that it is now recognised that the provision of roads, houses and hospitals creates real wealth and real jobs, and it is no longer "wet" to recommend that this should be done.

There has been no U-turn,—the Gardarene swine did not have to make a U-turn, only a change of direction. We have had the change of direction to which the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) referred—an L-turn. I hope that the Government will continue in the right direction. They can improve the situation in a number of ways. First, we need lower interest rates and hon. Member after hon. Member has explained how the CBI and everyone else knows that high interest rates have fuelled inflation, harmed British industry and done enormous damage by creating the Third world debt crisis. I have said time and again that it is all right being a Mafia loan shark if one has enforcers, but one cannot break the leg of the president of Brazil. Instead, one has to lend him more money and give him a tip for not defaulting. I was glad to hear the Chancellor say that he did not expect commercial banks to go on pouring money down the drain.

Secondly, I hope that the Government will make the progress, to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) referred, towards a new stability in monetary policy, beginning with the necessary first step of joining the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. We must see the free floating, which has not worked, replaced by the old managed floating or crawling peg. We should bear in mind the old Chinese proverb that the snake in the bamboo is still a wriggling animal. We can have much flexibility while avoiding some of the difficulties that have arisen in recent years.

Thirdly, as hon. Member after hon. Member has said, we must resist the temptation to use capital receipts to finance current consumption rather than putting them into reinvestment. There has been much talk about the family silver. If one is lucky enough to have some and can sell it, it is important to realise that one can only sell it once and that one must spend the proceeds wisely. It is foolish to spend them on a holiday to Malta, but it may be sensible to use them to repair the roof.

There are encouraging signs in the Government's policy. It is no longer possible to divide the Conservative party into wets and dries. That distinction has becomed blurred. We have been told that we must now be radicals or consolidators. I hope that there is a possibility of preferring consensus to confrontation, and of not differing too often on too many matters. I hope that it will not upset them, but I share the views of those of my hon. Friends who recently wrote a pamphlet called, "No Turning Back".

If there is a dividing line, I am on the side of the radicals. That is not surprising as I am rather pleased that I myself produced a pamphlet in 1969, which I somewhat pretentiously called "Right Angle—Philosophy for the Radical Right". That was thought heretical at the time. The great thing in politics is not to be right at the wrong time. At that time I was thought extremely Right-wing by those of my colleagues who subsequently served with me in Cabinet. They teased me and called me "Monday Club Rippon". I advocated not only tax cuts and tax reform but the denationalisation of the steel industry, the telephones, the air line corporations and other services. Therefore, I very much welcome the proposed privatisation measures in the Queen's Speech.

I believe in a free market, choice and competition, but I do not believe in the old 19th century concept of each man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. There must be safeguards for both public and individual rights and if we are concerned with the defence of freedom in all its aspects, we must be prepared to ensure that there is fair competition whether in regard to Sunday trading or any other trading.

I hope that we shall have a free vote on Sunday trading, as the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) said. There must be a fair balance between the conflicting interests on the basis that trying to achieve consensus is better than seeking confrontation. In a civilised society, one cannot have an unregulated free-for-all.

I welcome in particular the declaration in the Queen's Speech:

"Measures will be introduced to establish a new regulatory framework for the financial services sector, which will enhance its efficiency and competitiveness whilst providing greater safeguards for the interests of investors".

That may be relevant in the light of some of the exchanges that we had earlier this afternoon. When, in that pamphlet in 1969, I wrote of the dangers of a society that had become merger mad, I did not foresee the disorder that would exist today or that I would have to declare a personal interest. I shall do so. I am chairman of a public company, Britannia Arrow Holdings. It is now the target of a hostile bid, about which I shall not speak.

I hope that the Government will pay attention to the whole series of speeches, not just the one a week or so ago, by Mr. David Walker of the Bank of England. He drew attention to the way in which the long-term economic and business interests are being undermined by short-term considerations—what he called last year the "shortening focus". When one looks at what is going on in the City today, one has to ask oneself, "Who is minding the shop while the casino games are being played?" The late respected Patrick Hutber rightly foresaw the damage that could be done to an economy dominated by

"appalling young men pushing about pieces of paper."

Mr. Walker has challenged us to consider how far official attitudes to mergers and acquisition activities remain apt in the present fast-changing environment. Ministers have said that they want self-regulation within the statutory framework. That subtle theme has been used in the face of what the chairman of the stock exchange called the biggest revolution ever to hit a great capital market. We have to act decisively before next year's so-called big bang and we shall be on fairly dangerous and difficult ground when we deal with this legislation. I fancy that the debate will range beyond what the Government have in mind.

For example, we have to review the question whether Whitehall, the Bank of England or some other body will have to sort out the market distortions that have been created. It may be thought that the regulatory processes of the Bank of England are, in the circumstances of today, too secretive and uncertain to be regarded as satisfactory. We may have to consider whether we need something along the lines of the Securities Exchange Commission in the United States. In some respects our regulatory processes are stricter than those of the United States, and in others they are not. We must try to marry the two, and ensure that we have something better than we have today.

I have been impressed in the United States by the boards of independent directors who have the sole responsibility of protecting the interests of the shareholders and of ensuring that the financial services are properly run. In the United States, as here, there is growing recognition that action is essential before an outraged public demands excessively punitive regulations against the coterie of corporate raiders and speculators playing Monopoly, sometimes with junk bonds, at the expense of companies, their shareholders and employees, and the nation.

The consequences of next year's big bang in the City and its effect on the national economy may turn out to be the most important matter that we must consider this Session.

8.20 pm

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Yesterday, the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented to the House the Government's outline public expenditure plans, and made it clear that the Government's priorities were now running in the direction of tax cuts and privatisation. Indeed, the second is partly to finance the first, and I suggest that that objective is pursued with crossed fingers.

I wish to show how the Government's intentions show little accord with the needs of south Yorkshire and, indeed, with the needs of the Yorkshire and Humberside regions, both of which need improved infrastructure, the regeneration of traditional industry and the cultivation of new industry to stem the drift from north to south.

Yorkshire and Humberside is one of the great traditional manufacturing regions. Shipping, steel, heavy and light engineering, coal, textiles and clothing all helped to forge the industrial reputation of our country, and they are now at risk. Those industries still form the backbone of the region's economic structure, but are now deemed to be unfashionable smoke-stack industries, and apparently unsuitable for the economic and environmental needs of a modern, fully developed Western industrial society.

In previous recessions, Sheffield and the towns around it fared better than other parts of Yorkshire and Humberside. The last five years, however, have seen the reversal of that position, largely due to the steady erosion of the United Kingdom cutlery industry in the 1970s, and the savage decline in the steel and engineering industries subsequently. For the first time, Sheffield and south Yorkshire face a major long-term problem of remedying structural decline in their basic industries of steel, engineering and coal mining. The economy of south Yorkshire is possibly in worse shape than any other part of the United Kingdom, and that of the rest of Yorkshire and Humberside is not much better.

A delegation from the Yorkshire regional Trades Union Congress briefed Yorkshire Labour Members a week ago in the House on the manner in which the economic decline of their region was affecting its members. Since the Tory Government came to power, 18,500 mining jobs have been lost, the public services have been decimated, and 13,000 jobs at the west and south Yorkshire county councils are at risk from abolition. The Transport Act 1985 has been the cause of reduced rural transport services, and the water industry is gearing up for privatisation proposals. The youth training scheme has been masking the real educational needs of the region, and in any event mode B schemes are being reduced. The operational fire services were being reduced by 17·5 per cent. and 20 per cent. in west and south Yorkshire respectively.

Yorkshire and Humberside face the major social problems of high levels of unemployment, land dereliction, obsolete buildings and poor grade housing stock. The senior trade union officers argue that the region urgently requires major manufacturing and infrastructure investment. They see no evidence of the record job creation, to which the Government lay claim.

In a report published last week, the Yorkshire and Humberside county councils association shows that much of the region's fixed capital stock is in need of renewal. Particular problems are found in housing, water supply, sewage disposal, river pollution, coastal protection and the road network. The association wishes to underline the need for more regional public expenditure, and the beneficial effects that that would have on the one in eight of Yorkshire's 300,000 unemployed who are from the construction industry.

[Mr. A. E. P. Duffy]

Last week the association of Yorkshire and Humberside chambers of commerce called for the region's traditional manufacturing base to be encouraged and redeveloped, and not allowed to

"deteriorate slowly in the vague hope that the vacuum will be filled by services and tourism."

As Lord Weinstock remarked to the House of Lords Overseas Trade Select Committee during its recent inquiry into manufacturing trade,

"What will the service industry be servicing when there is no hardware, when no wealth is actually being produced?"

That raises the all important question of business confidence, which is the prerequisite of investment decisions, which in turn lead to output and jobs.

That recent report shows how concerned large sections of industry are, not only about the present state of the economy, but particularly about the prospects for the rest of the decade. We even have the Institute of Directors calling unashamedly for reflation.

That, taken together with the views of the chambers of commerce, the county councils association and the regional TUC in Yorkshire and Humberside—there are no more representative, more credible, weightier authorities in the region than those bodies—all of which have been made known only during the past week, suggests that the Government's policy of reviving business confidence simply by opting out of the economy has failed lamentably.

Apart from the development of the petroleum, petrochemical and oil-based industries on Humberside in the 1960s, Yorkshire and Humberside as a whole has not attracted new technologies.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): The institutions to which the hon. Gentleman referred are weighty and well-respected, but how does he square his analysis of the position with the fact that the unemployment figure for Scunthorpe, which, like his constituency, went through terrible times in the early 1980s, is 1,000 lower today than a year ago?

Mr. Duffy: The hon. Gentleman does not say what the unemployment figure is today, and how it compares with the level of employment six years ago when the Government came to office. It is that which has moved all those representative bodies, at least two of which speak for him as well as for me, to publish those reports last week. If the hon. Gentleman has not already done so, I recommend that he looks at their contents.

Apart from the development of the industries that I mentioned in the 1960s, there have been no new technologies in the regions. There have been some home-grown developments, particularly in the Leeds area, and Harrogate has attracted scientific research and development, but the conclusion that Yorkshire and Humberside have done less well than Scotland, London and the south-east is inescapable.

South Yorkshire has an extremely low level of employment in computing and microprocessor related activities. In 1981, the latest date for official figures, those industries accounted for only 1,055 jobs or 0·2 per cent. of total employment. That is well below the national average of 1 per cent., or the national high of 1·6 per cent. in the south-east.

The South Yorkshire county council has tried in several ways to stimulate growth, but it is constrained by limited finance. The county's employment promotion and development budget of £2 million compares with Government aid totalling £298 million, available under the support for innovation programme in the current financial year.

The south-east, the most prosperous region, with the highest proportion of high tech industry, received £25·1 million—almost 10 times the assistance of £2·7 million offered to Yorkshire companies.

The problems of the older industrial areas such as Yorkshire and Humberside are clearly primarily economic. In the absence of active policies to promote regeneration — precisely the policies called for by Government Members today—their relative position is likely to worsen. Yesterday's autumn statement is not enough.

The drift to two nations in economic terms will continue unless the fundamental economic problems of the northern industrial districts are tackled. That calls for an open acknowledgement by the Government that they recognise the crisis that faces regions such as Yorkshire and Humberside and that they are prepared to do something fundamental about it.

According to the association of Yorkshire and Humberside chambers of commerce business confidence requires a serious, open, declared commitment to sustained expansion at a stable but realistic exchange rate, not a grudging, hidden, one-off, pre-election tax cut partly financed by sales of assets and higher nationalised industry prices accompanied by an unsustainably high exchange rate.

8.32 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): I rise to congratulate the Government and to ask them one question. However, before I ask the question I stress the Government's economic achievements. We have today both high growth and low inflation, which has eluded all Governments since the war. It has eluded all past Prime Ministers and Chancellors of the Exchequer, and it is the envy of most democratic countries. Growth is 3 per cent. and inflation next year will be heading for 3·25 per cent. For the first time since the 1960s the differential between the inflation rate and the growth rate is less than 1 per cent. That is a great achievement.

When one considers the circumstances, that achievement is all the more admirable. The Government have faced a world recession, which in some respects is worse than that of 1929, and terrible labour relations. We all remember the winter of discontent and the problems of restrictive practices. The ambience is different. Old industries operated at vast losses. Today even the larger industries run at considerable profit. The growth in new companies is huge, particularly in high tech and service industries.

The lack of enterprise which was typical in 1979 has changed. The enterprise spirit is on the way. It is here. Attitudes are different from those which persisted in 1979. We should be thankful for that outstanding achievement. If Opposition Members were truthful, they would admit that they wish that they could announce the same type of achievements as were announced by the Chancellor yesterday and today.

Real growth is tough, but it allows for healthy increased Government spending by taking less of a share of the national wealth. It takes less of the national cake, leaving

more in the wealth creators' hands and so allows for lower tax rates which again increase the enterprise spirit. The fall in North sea oil revenues is taken into account. People ask what will happen when the North sea oil revenues fall. The Chancellor's calculations include that eventuality and allow for increased spending on infrastructure.

Many people say that the Government have changed. I do not believe that. The Government's aims have not changed one jot. They are still out to beat inflation, as they were in 1979. Of course they have changed their spending. The reason is that there is more money to spend. We have real growth and therefore the Government can change their spending habits while not losing sight of their goal.

As the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said, we slipped from being number three to number 19 in the league of industrial nations in our decline. To change from that stagnation and inflation to growth and lower inflation has a serious price. The price is unemployment, that terrible scourge. Terrible and dreadful though unemployment is, we all knew in our heart of hearts that the massive overmanning — about 5 million people in jobs that did not exist—cost money rather than made money. We knew that massive unemployment would result from reversing the enormous investment in unprofitable and unproductive businesses.

That transition has been dreadfully hard and tough. I know that unemployment levels are dreadful and high, but they could have been worse without the Government's constructive measures.

We have resisted competition for years and we now have to compete. Suddenly in 1979 we were faced with the prospect of going down the tube and becoming a Third world country or facing competition and trying to retain our status as a developed country in the modern technological world. To do that we had to face the competition of hard-working, low-wage economies.

Cutting wages was never a political alternative. We had to push for the technological revolution. In doing that we had to accept the new services and high tech industries. We had to move out of manufacturing into the new industries of today and tomorrow.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was right to say that we must not deceive people about unemployment. I was interested in the way that he talked about that. He seemed to fear deception. Neither Government nor employers create genuine, profitable jobs—only customers can create them.

Some people urge massive Government spending to create jobs. They are calling for investment in unprofitable companies and projects. They are urging higher taxes and higher interest rates which will result in higher inflation and lower growth. Those remedies have been tried by Governments of both parties. We have seen the disasters and we know that they do not work. Such remedies are mere electoral bribes — borrow more, tax more and spend it on projects that might win votes. The result is national decline. At long last, we have a Government who are showing us the way to success. Why do Opposition Members laugh and scorn? Why do they not back the Government and admit that they wish that they were in a position to announce such achievements?

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has said that we must not take a risk with inflation. If there were to be an untoward drop in interest rates, that could lower the level of sterling and cause a rise in inflation. With that in mind, on 30 October I asked my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister whether, with the low levels of sterling then, which became even lower—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members might not agree, but if we had entered the European monetary system at those lower levels, would we not be in a better position today? We could accept lower interest rates without having the kick-on effect of a lower exchange rate and, therefore, higher inflation.

I realise that entering the European monetary system would have enormous political effects. However, high interest rates also have enormous political effects. Should not my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, despite political implications, consider the growing demand to enter the European monetary system? That would allow us to have much more flexible interest rates. It is silly to remain the one country without a currency in a major currency block. There is talk of Britain being a petrocurrency, but that is nonsense. Oil is a small amount of our national revenue —about 6 per cent. for oil and gas together.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on his proposals. Government policies are arresting our economic decline and putting us on the threshold of real growth.

8.42 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I must first emphasise that, yet again, the Queen's Speech offers no prospect of a reduction in unemployment. Indeed, most forecasters believe that the high level of unemployment will continue for some time. We must concern ourselves with the present level—more than 40 per cent. of those unemployed have been out of work for a year or more.

In the area covered by the West Midlands county council, the figure for those out of work for one year or more is 50 per cent. and many have been unemployed for over three years. Perhaps the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) should bear that in mind. It is understandable that those made redundant in their fifties give up any hope of finding a job. Unfortunately, that is also becoming true for those made redundant in their forties.

It was deeply offensive to hear the new deputy chairman of the Tory party, Mr. Jeffrey Archer, say that the unemployed should get off their backsides and find work. We tried yesterday to get the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to dissociate himself from those offensive remarks, but he did not wish to do so. My local newspaper, *The Express and Star*, in an article headlined "Hundreds in job rush", said that hundreds of work-hungry people besieged a Wolverhampton jobcentre last month after hearing of jobs being offered by a local tyre factory. Men and women began queuing at 2 am. Should they be told to get off their backsides? The jobcentre manager said that there were several thousand applications, and that jobs were going fast. One of those who queued for a job was a 57-year-old man, who stood shivering through a chilly night for more than five hours. He said that he did not mind that because

"I thought they might give me a job if I came early."

That man had been out of work for some years. I wonder what sort of lecture he requires from the deputy chairman of the Tory party.

Mr. Archer claimed that he knew what unemployment was like, and gave an example of when he had debts of £400,000. What he said in that notorious interview must have been embarrassing for Ministers. However, in truth, what he said was probably what a number of Ministers and

[Mr. David Winnick]

Conservative Members believe. The difference is that Mr. Archer decided to blurt it out. He is not a Member of the House and is not subject to the electorate. I believe that he reflected the feelings of a number of Conservatives. I should not be at all surprised if he said what the Prime Minister privately believes.

However, the Secretary of State for Energy does not believe that. In his speech to the Tory Reform Group during the party conference, he said that voters who had accepted Tory arguments about unemployment in 1983 would not accept the same excuse a second time. How right he was. Indeed, the hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) made that very point when he spoke last night.

The Times, in its leader, said that the Secretary of State for Energy must decide whether, following his extraordinarily clear assault on the heart of Government policy, he could in decent self-respect continue to sit in the Cabinet. The right hon. Gentleman has answered that question. Although he does not agree with the main thrust of Government economic policy, he has no wish to offer his resignation. He likes being in the Cabinet.

Between June 1979 and June this year, there has been a 30 per cent. drop in the number of people employed in manufacturing industry in the west midlands. That shows what has happened in the region since the Government took office — factory closures, massive redundancies, large-scale unemployment, the accompanying poverty and hardship and so on. The region has been devastated, and it is inevitable and right that there should be such harsh criticism of the Government from the people there.

What is true of the west midlands generally is true of the Black Country and certainly of the area that I represent. When I was elected in 1979, unemployment in the Walsall travel-to-work area was just 5·1 per cent.—the figure for the west midlands as a whole. It is now 17 per cent., and has been around that for three or four years. Those made redundant find it so difficult to obtain work. Having reached a certain age, they conclude that their chance of ever working again, without a real change in economic policy, is very remote. They can look forward only to receiving the old-age pension and continuing to live in poverty.

In addition to all that, having penalised so many people because of their economic policies and made so many redundant, the Government follow other policies that make it difficult for those people and their families to manage.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): In fairness to the Secretary of State for the Environment, he wanted £600 million more to renovate houses. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is iniquitous that some Conservative Members are getting as much as £20,000 worth of grant to renovate old houses, which they sell? Is that not a travesty of justice?

Mr. Winnick: That is an interesting comment. I am reminded that the first time I heard of the Chancellor of the Exchequer was in 1966 when he managed to get a council mortgage for what was then a very large sum of money for a property in Lord North street; it was not the sort of property that Labour Members live in.

Ministers have tried to rubbish the report of the Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade, but it spells out clearly the bleak future for Britain when oil runs out unless there is a change of economic policy. Ministers and Back Benchers like the hon. Member for Winchester have been telling us about how things are changing for the better. We should perhaps note that yesterday the CBI brought out a report entitled "Managing for Success" which said:

> "Manufacturers are especially concerned about government policy—60 per cent. of all the interviews subscribed to the view that the 'government had written off manufacturing'. Some of these stated quite openly that in view of this, one of their strategic goals was to get out of manufacturing in the UK."

In the same report the CBI states that seven of our most successful companies are planning to pull out of manufacturing in Britain because of Government policy. That is hardly what one would describe as optimism on the management side of industry about the policies being pursued by the Government.

My hon. Friends and I have always criticised Government economic policies. We have spoken about mass unemployment. Our job is to convince the country that there is an alternative. We did not unfortunately succeed last time. An increasing number of people who gave the Tories the benefit of the doubt two years ago because of various factors, including the Falklands, will not be willing I believe to give them the benefit of the doubt at the next election. There is a growing wish among the people, including many in employment, for a change of economic policy. They do not believe that we should have permanent mass unemployment.

Our job as an Opposition is to persuade our fellow citizens that there is an alternative and to see to it that a Labour Government are elected so that the disaster that has befallen the country in the last six years can be wiped out. That is the best prospect for Britain — a Labour Government with a working majority.

8.52 pm

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): Her Majesty's Gracious Speech contained two main themes—law and order and a series of measures related to the economy. I welcome the passage in the Gracious Speech which says:

> "Measures will be introduced to strengthen the powers of the police".

In particular, I welcome the proposal that we should take

> "power to confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking and to penalise the handling of such proceeds."

Such a measure is long overdue.

A great deal of extra resources will be needed if we are to win the battle against drug trafficking. We still have a chance of avoiding the tragic position that has developed in the United States if we get sufficient co-ordination between the police, the Home Office, Customs and Excise, the Department of Health and Social Security and the Foreign Office, all of whom will necessarily be involved in the most important social battle we face. Therefore, I welcome the proposal just announced to increase the number of Customs and Excise officials concerned with that problem, although still further resources will be necessary. Certainly the Bill which is envisaged on penalties is greatly to be welcomed.

I want to concentrate on the economic aspects of the Queen's Speech, to some extent because of the statement made yesterday by the Chancellor and his speech today. I welcome the improvement in presentation in the document which reflects the recommendation of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service. That is a considerable advance.

Obviously the Select Committee will wish to take evidence from officials and Ministers on the autumn statement before we have a debate which I hope will take place as soon as we have been able to make our report. I regret that the Chancellor has decided not to publish a fiscal adjustment. It makes it more difficult for the House to have a coherent and sensible debate. Although the Chancellor argued that the announcement last year had an effect on speculation in the exchange rate, that was also due to a considerable extent to statements made by Ministers about cutting taxes. We are still getting such statements, but the cuts are not quantified. That does not help the debate which will ensue on the autumn statement.

I am also worried because revenue forecasts have been suppressed. The Chancellor, whom I am glad to see in his place, has repeated time and time again that finance must determine expenditure rather than the other way about. How are we to judge the expenditure plans in the autumn statement if we are not given an idea of what the revenue is? No doubt we will wish to pursue that point with him.

I support the way in which the Government are pursuing the privatisation policy. It will improve efficiency and it is right to encourage wider share ownership. It will be necessary to make sure that the anti-monopoly legislation is adequate to deal with the setting up of many more private monopolies. In the exchange earlier today in the House it was made clear that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will review competition policy. That matter is more urgent than he suggested, given the changes which are taking place in the major monopolies in the public sector which are to be transferred to the private sector.

That brings me to the accounting convention for asset sales. Although I am strongly in favour of the policy, it is important that the financial consequences should not be allowed to conceal the effects on the economy. I find it strange that the Government should continue to regard the proceeds of asset sales as a reduction in public expenditure and borrowing. The Select Committee has made it clear that it regards it as a means of financing the borrowing requirement itself. If that adjustment is made — the Chancellor says it is possible to make it—the emphasis is different.

In the autumn statement the Chancellor has published a figure for public expenditure both with asset sales proceeds and without. He does not make a corresponding adjustment for the public sector borrowing requirement, which should be done if one regards the asset sales proceeds in the way that the Select Committee has suggested. If that adjustment is made, the overall impact of the measures which the Chancellor is taking is different. That being so, it is inevitable that any Government, whatever they do and even if they do nothing in the light of a given economic situation, are endorsing reflation of the economy, deflation or trying to leave it where it is. We must not be afraid of expressing a view; otherwise the position will become very confused.

The presentation of the Government's policies gives great cause for concern to all those outside who will be taking business decisions. For several years we have not succeeded in cutting or controlling public expenditure adequately. That is clear from the reports of the Select Committee. But we have had the worst of both worlds, because we have been saying that we have been cutting expenditure when we have not, without pointing out the advantages of the increased public expenditure that has taken place. I am glad that the point has penetrated to the Front Bench, and that we are now getting recognition of the benefits which may flow from public expenditure on sensible projects. To that extent we have benefited by our presentation.

My fear is that in the future we shall not stress that we have been flexible in our approach and that, as a result, we shall continue to be blamed for matters which were never the case and will not be the case in the future. That being so, there are real presentational problems with which I hope the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be able to deal adequately. In the context of reflation, deflation and so on, that is extremely important in relation to international monetary affairs, as was stressed by the Chancellor and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath).

It may well be that, as a result of the very difficult international monetary problems, a situation will arise in which there is a world recession created by a hard landing for the dollar or by some other conjunction of events in the United States. If that is so, it will be necessary for the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for other EEC countries and for the Japanese to take offsetting action. Therefore, if we stigmatise reflation in the way that I have described, we shall be inhibited in taking such action, and that will be very dangerous for us.

The Chancellor referred to the great increase in intervention in exchange markets, which I welcome, but it is limited in what it can achieve. If we are to achieve real progress in this area, there will have to be more international co-ordination of economic policies. In the difficult situation that I have just described, it may mean having to take measures to adjust the pattern that the Chancellor would otherwise have followed in the normal course of events.

It is not a question of tax cuts on the one hand or infrastructure expenditure on the other. Some tax cuts may be good or they may be bad. Some infrastructure expenditure may be good or it may be bad. We need to hit the right balance. I welcome the fact that in his statement yesterday and in his speech today the Chancellor adopted a more flexible approach, but I wish that he would make that more explicit; otherwise, we shall not get the credit for what is rightly being done.

I believe that the measures taken by the Chancellor will help to reduce unemployment, but I must recall the shake-out of labour three or four years ago, when many people became redundant as a result of the world recession, the Clegg pay settlements and so on. At that time many companies cut their labour force by 30 per cent. and found that they could produce just as much with a much smaller labour force. In reality, those jobs did not exist, and the problem now is that we must create that many new jobs. It will inevitably mean a long, hard journey, but the Chancellor's statement yesterday is of assistance in that respect. I hope that, in the light of the further analysis of the Chancellor's remarks by the Select Committee, we shall be able to make even greater improvements.

9.3 pm

Mr. Michael Portillo (Enfield, Southgate): My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) has been generous in keeping his remarks so short, and I am sorry that I have to begin by disagreeing with him on one point. I welcome the fact that on this occasion the Chancellor of the Exchequer has not published a fiscal

[Mr. Michael Portillo]

adjustment, because the fiscal adjustment has been given an importance which it did not merit, and that led to all sorts of speculation. I have had the opportunity previously of making that point in the House.

I welcome the commitment in the Gracious Speech, in rather specific terms, to reductions in income tax. I equally welcome the Chancellor's commitment, not only through the Gracious Speech but through the autumn statement, to the continuing containment of inflation, which is so important. For all the time that the Government have been in office, fiscal and monetary policies have worked together to reduce the rate of inflation, but I wonder whether recently there has not been something of a contest between monetary policy on the one hand and fiscal policy on the other. I wonder whether, like two great stags, they have not locked antlers and done battle on this occasion and whether it is not fiscal policy that has come off, not dead in the end, but at least limping. I say that because the PSBR this year will be £1 billion higher than we thought and it is conceivable that it will turn out higher still.

It is also conceivable that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will be influenced in his Budget judgment by the importance of tax cuts. Of course, while it would not be right to add asset sales to the PSBR to arrive at a new figure for borrowing, nevertheless the stance of the PSBR is somewhat looser than is indicated by the pure £8 billion published in the autumn statement. That is why I wonder whether fiscal policy at this stage is not limping.

If it is, I can perfectly understand why, because there are certain arguments for saying that there is a weaker case nowadays for a tight fiscal stance than there was before. In particular, the theory that a very large amount of Government borrowing tends to crowd out borrowing by the industrial sector is far less convincing than it used to be in today's internationalised money markets to which companies find it easy to turn for finance. The other thing is that a low PSBR used to be considered essential for the achievement of low interest rates, but if under our monetary policy we shall have high interest rates anyway, there is some reason for saying that one can borrow rather more because the interest rates make it very easy to finance a slightly higher PSBR.

Then again, there is the rather tempting example of President Reagan whose policies have provided a supply-side stimulus. Although Thatcherism and Reaganomics are very often considered the same thing, they are approached from different angles in that President Reagan has addressed the question of tax cuts without much regard to the effect on deficits, whereas here we have addressed the matter of deficits without cutting taxes as much as we would otherwise have liked.

I am, therefore, a little concerned that we are defending the inflationary position through monetary policy alone and less through fiscal policy than previously. It seems to be a rather thin red line. It seems to me that the present monetary position must be right because that is indicated by both the exchange rate and the downward path of inflation itself, but the problem is that the exchange rate can change very rapidly, and inflation is more an indicator that yesterday's monetary conditions were right than that today's are right.

In the very few minutes remaining, perhaps I may turn to what may happen in the next Budget. Here is where I fear I must disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) when I say that I would like to see any tax cuts made on the standard rate and not on the thresholds. If we look at international comparisons, what sticks out like a sore thumb about this country is the point at which people begin to pay tax at 30 per cent.

The threshold itself is not out of line with the rest of the EEC and is a great deal higher than in a certain number of other countries. The important point is that the single man here is paying 30 per cent. tax when he earns just over £2,000 a year. The equivalent figures for France are £8,000, for the United States £22,000 and for Japan £31,000. In those countries the single man would pay tax at 30 per cent. only at those very much higher levels. Our starting rate of tax in this country is the highest of any country bar one, the Republic of Ireland, which is 35 per cent.

If we believe, as Conservative Members do, that cutting taxes can have an incentive effect, we must be concerned about cutting the marginal rate. What is important to us is how much of any extra pound earned a person can keep for himself. If we tackle the thresholds, we are not attacking that problem — another very important problem, but not that one. While it is also true that raising the thresholds relieves people from the poverty and unemployment traps, a large number of those people are brought back into those traps by the end of the year through the effect of inflation, whereas, if we reduce the standard rate of tax, we are reducing the effect of the traps for everybody who is in them.

I do not think that privatisation and tax cuts are as closely linked as the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) would imply, nor are they as far apart as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has suggested. There are very good reasons for privatising companies that have nothing to do with cutting taxes. On the other hand, the proceeds from the sale of those assets can be extremely helpful in producing tax cuts. That is a reasonable policy to follow. After all, the assets were acquired for the public sector by the spending of taxpayers' money and have been sustained through years of loss making by the spending of more taxpayers' money. Since the nationalised industries were brought into being, the rate of return to the taxpayer has, on average, been zero.

I do not regard the tax cuts that would result from this as temporary. We now see that the way ahead is through growth, so that in the future we can produce tax revenues as great as those of the past, but at lower rates of tax.

9.10 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): We are concluding what I suspect will be the last debate on the Gracious Speech that the House will hold in the relative privacy of the Press Gallery and sound radio. Last Thursday the Lord Privy Seal hinted that in his reply tonight he would say something about televising our debates.

What really matters is the conversion some months ago of the Prime Minister—she who must be obeyed—to the belief that she, her Ministers and the Conservative party would benefit from still greater exposure to the television cameras. Those who listened to our six-day debate may find that an extraordinary belief. In any event, it will be for the House itself to decide.

If the House does say yes to television, I for one will welcome the opportunity of exposing our affairs without editorial bias and proprietorial prejudice, direct and

untarnished to the gaze and judgment of the nation. We shall welcome that because under fair rules, policy presented, debated, probed and opposed without intermediaries directly before our own people is the best possible antidote to the sleek and glib public relations presentation of policy upon which the Government now place their hope of survival.

The Prime Minister and Chancellor can plunder the record and carefully select supportive statistics to raise morale. They can speak of the economy as a dream come true. But given the glum faces behind the Prime Minister last Wednesday and again during the Chancellor's speech today, I can only conclude that "Exercise Economic Hype" will simply not work. It will work still less when the television cameras are in place.

There was not much pleasure for the Chancellor in the speeches that we have heard today. I heard all but two — I have notes on the : that I missed — of the 19 speeches that were made. It is fair to say that only one was overwhelmingly in favour of the Chancellor's general economic strategy, and not surprisingly that was delivered by the Chancellor himself. However, he had some considerable support from the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne), who I understand has had to leave us. That hon. Gentleman is one of the more impressionable hon. Members of this House, particularly when the Government Front Bench is giving a clear lead.

The Opposition speeches properly reflected our growing concern, anxiety and anger about the state of unemployment and the collapse of manufacturing industry. Speeches from Conservative Members were also interesting, because though they varied in emphasis they picked up the theme of real concern about where we are going as a country. I refer particularly to the speech of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and that of the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym), with his call for a new agenda.

Those leading speeches expressed deep anxiety about the general direction of our present economic policy. However, I shall treasure most the words of the right hon. and learned Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon). He defended the Chancellor of the Exchequer against any accusation of having made a U-turn. He said that there was no question of the Government having made a U-turn. After all, the Gadarene swine did not make a U-turn either. They simply went over the edge of the cliff. That was memorable indeed.

Mr. Rippon: I do not like to be misquoted. I said that there was no need for a U-turn because the Gadarene swine only had to make a change of direction. That is what has happened.

Mr. Shore: I am entirely happy with the right hon. and learned Gentleman's explanation.

Three major facts testify to the continued failure of the Government's economic strategy. The first is the scourge of nationwide unemployment, which shows no sign of abating. Unemployment in October of this year—I am looking at the Department of Employment's own handout —stood at 3,175,000. This figure is 81,000 higher than it was when we debated the Gracious Speech a year ago. As we all know, this figure would be much higher but for the statistical adjustments that were made two years ago and the exclusion of at least 300,000 temporary jobs, not real jobs, that the Government are directly financing. Therefore, despite all the spurious optimism of the speeches that we heard both yesterday and today, the fact is, as the autumn statement revealed, that the unemployment assumption that the Government had to make for national insurance purposes in the autumn statement stands at 3 million for the next three years.

Secondly, linked to unemployment is the continuing and disastrous decline of British manufacturing industry. I agree very much with what has been said about this by so many right hon. and hon. Members. On Wednesday of last week the Prime Minister was quite brazen when she spoke about British industry having exported more manufactured goods last year than ever before in our history. She boasted:

"Manufacturing investment was up last year by more than 14 per cent."—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 21.]

Yet she knows very well that manufactured imports continue to flood in and that our manufacturing trade deficit is running at well over £4 billion a year. The Prime Minister also knows that, despite the two-year short-term but time-limited boost that the phasing out of capital allowances has provided, manufacturing investment is 18 per cent. lower than it was in 1979.

The third basic fact about the failure of the Government's economic strategy is that today we are viable only through the accelerated run-down of our North sea oil supplies. Last year our net exports were £7 billion. This year the figure is likely to be £8 billion. Britain is exporting more oil than Saudi Arabia, but we do not possess the Saudi Arabian reserves. Such exports cannot, therefore, continue.

I well understand the Government's irritation with the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade. They did not conceal their irritation. Apart from the mass of damning evidence that was presented by leading British manufacturing firms, the Select Committee looked ahead to 1990, only five years away. On very reasonable assumptions it looked to the falling off of our North sea oil export surplus to something like self-sufficiency by 1990 and the accompanying growth of a current account deficit of over £13,000 million a year. It issued a warning, which is worth repeating:

"Unless the climate is changed so that the manufacturing base is enlarged and steps are taken to ensure that import penetration is combated and that manufactured exports are stimulated, as the oil revenues diminish the country will experience adverse effects which will worsen with time. These will include:

(i) a contraction of manufacturing to the point where the successful continuation of much of manufacturing activity is put at risk;

(ii) an irreplaceable loss of GDP;

(iii) an adverse balance of payments of such proportions that severely deflationary measures will be needed;

(iv) lower tax revenue for public spending on welfare, defence and other areas;

(v) higher unemployment, with little prospect of reducing it; and

(vi) the economy stagnating and inflation rising, driven up by a falling exchange rate."

The Committee concluded with the words:

"These prospects constitute a grave threat to the standard of living of the British people. Failure to recognise these dangers now could have a devastating effect on the future economic and political stability of the nation. The situation in which we find ourselves is not self-correcting: things will not come right of their own accord."

Against that prospect the Queen's Speech proposals and the ministerial elaborations upon them are a monumental irrelevance. The Government are complacently presiding

[Mr. Shore]

over an accelerating and historic decline of the British economy. That decline is temporarily concealed by the incontinent plundering of North sea oil and by the massive sale of national assets, as was announced yesterday. I say "temporarily" because by 1990 the game will be up.

Perhaps the most depressing fact in the Gracious Speech is the Government's inability to learn from their own experience. It is true that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has eaten his words about the money supply. The control of M3 was his and the Prime Minister's own sovereign remedy for the nation's ills, and those who recall the devastating impact of 17 per cent. base rates and the pound at $2·40 will know the price that the nation paid in collapsing industries and in lost jobs, for their monumental folly, from 1979 to 1981. As Mr. Peter Jay, who helped to instruct the right hon. Lady in the mysteries of monetarism in the pre-1979 period, is reported to have said:

"It was like showing Genghis Khan a map of the world."

Not only have we had not a single word of regret from either the Prime Minister or the Chancellor of the Exchequer for having misled themselves and inflicted such damage upon the British economy, but they are still firmly wedded to the doctrines of high interest rates and an artificial exchange rate that goes with that. Of course, there have been increases in productivity, but increases have also taken place in the economies of our major competitors. The net effect is that British industry is at least 19 per cent. less competitive internationally than it was six years ago—*[Interruption.]* That is the truth.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): They are squirming.

Mr. Shore: I am quoting from the IMF relative normalised labour costs index, which is normally accepted as the measure of international competitiveness. I am comparing the second quarter of 1979 with the second quarter of 1985, which is the latest date available.

What is the Government's remedy? It is very simple. First, it is to ease slightly the rigours of public expenditure cuts and then to cut taxes, both financed by capital receipts from the accelerated sale of publicly owned assets. That will do little to stimulate the economy, but, as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said, it will certainly accelerate the menacing flood of imports of consumer and other goods.

Secondly, it is part of the Government's strategy to cut wages. The Government have already announced their intention to reduce the scope of our already emasculated wages councils. Of course, labour costs matter. Nobody would deny that. However, competitiveness also involves quality of management, excellence of design, product innovation through research and development, fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies. In all those areas, Government policies have directly damaged, not assisted, competitiveness. To put the whole onus of competitiveness on wages is a recipe for industrial divisiveness, lowering the living standards of the least well off and maintaining the present army of the unemployed.

Nowhere has the impact of Government economic policy been more harshly felt than in the inner cities. To make matters worse, there has been a massive switch of resources of Government finance away from the inner cities. Eight years ago, when unemployment was only one third of what it is today, the Labour Government designated, out of the 364 local authority districts in England, just 14 as areas of exceptional deprivation and need, for which additional resources had to be found. Those 14 authorities were grouped into what we described as seven partnership areas — Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester — Salford, Newcastle — Gateshead, and, in London, the three further areas of Lambeth, Hackney and Islington and the five dockland boroughs. We used three instruments of policy to assist them—the rate support grant, which was based on the assessment of needs, the housing investment programmes, which came directly under ministerial control, and the refurbished urban programme.

What has happened since? In real terms — *[Interruption.]* The House should listen. I do not think that the magnitude of what has happened has sunk in. In real terms, the urban programme in those partnership areas has increased from about £150 million in 1979 to about £200 million last year, in constant prices—an increase of £50 million. However, the rate support grant has been reduced in constant prices by no less than about £720 million a year in 14 inner city districts alone. In the same period and in the same 14 districts the housing investment programmes have been cut by over £270 million, in real terms. Therefore, the 14 areas of the greatest deprivation in our inner cities have been savaged in just six years to the tune of £900 million a year.

We have, indeed, an inner city crisis. Of course, there is social tension in those areas. Of course, there is vandalism and graffiti. Of course, there is more petty theft and housebreaking. Of course, there are aggravated racial tensions when black and white unemployed are competing for a wholly inadequate supply of jobs and housing.

When old people in the inner cities are afraid to go out after dark, when women are mugged in the street and assaulted, even in their homes, when Asian families are abused and attacked and their homes are even set on fire in the dead of night, we do not need to be told by the Prime Minister or anyone else of the need for law and order. That is essential.

Strong, sensitive and even-handed policing is only one ingredient of an effective inner city policy. Last Wednesday, the Prime Minister addressed herself to inner city problems. She said:

"Of course, there are very severe social problems in the inner city areas—problems of family breakdown, of racial tension, of drug abuse, of youth unemployment, of bad housing. In so far as money can help, those problems are taken into account in public expenditure".

In so far as money can help? The Prime Minister obviously believes that there is a connection between public expenditure and social problems in what she called "the areas affected by riots".—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 25.]

It is unique to the Prime Minister that, having deprived the most blighted of our inner cities of some £900 million a year, she apparently believes that the less spent on inner cities, the less likely those areas are to be affected by disturbance and riot. That is a flight from reality bordering on the insane.

The most sensible statement on this issue was made by Lord Scarman in 1981, following his examination of the first wave of urban riots in Britain. He said:

"The social conditions in Brixton—many of which are to be found in other inner city areas—do not provide an excuse for disorder. They cannot justify attacks on the police in the streets, arson or riot . . . At the same time the disorders in

Brixton cannot be fully understood unless they are seen in the context of complex political, social and economic factors. In analysing communal disturbances such as those in Brixton and elsewhere, to ignore the existence of these factors is to put the nation in peril."

It is interesting to recall the words of the Prime Minister when in opposition. At the 1977 Tory party conference she said:

"I do not intend to sit on the sidelines wringing my hands while London, Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham and the rest of our cities go the way of New York."

The truth is that they are going the way of New York. Once again, there is nothing in the Gracious Speech or the Chancellor's autumn statement to show that the Government have the faintest glimmer of an understanding of the problems.

No amount of public relations or improvement in the presentation of policy will conceal the stark reality of national decline, ever-increasing division and social strain. The tiny sum of £250 million to be allocated to the housing programme was announced yesterday at the same time as the publication of a new and serious estimate of the need for £19 billion expenditure on refurbishing the public sector housing stock. That epitomises the tokenism and gimmickry of the Government's policy. For all those reasons, we shall vote for our amendment.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As only four members of the Cabinet are present, may I suggest that the sitting be suspended to allow more of them to come in to support the Government's case?

Mr. Speaker: I call the Lord Privy Seal.

9.34 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): We are now in the closing moments of the debate on the Loyal Address. This is Parliament's central debate of the Session. It began a week ago with speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre) and for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone).

As the debate has proceeded — [HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"]

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is very unseemly behaviour. I call the Lord Privy Seal.

Mr. Ewing: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have heard the hon. Gentleman's point of order.

Several Hon. Members: They are not here.

Mr. Biffen: As the debate has proceeded, it has blended into a national debate, and never more so than today, when the affairs of the economy have been under scrutiny. It is nevertheless symbolic of the unifying character of the Chamber that what sets out as a matter of constituency representation becomes part of that wider debate. It is well worth making that point, given that the Queen's Speech is redolent of ceremony and tradition. *[Interruption.]* There is a convention——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is a convention, as the Lord Privy Seal said, that every right hon. and hon. Member is given a fair hearing.

Mr. Biffen: There is a convention that I spend at least part of this speech considering the work of the Chamber in the coming Session. I should therefore like to say something about our procedures, about the work of Select Committees and about the televising of Parliament.

The House recognises the valuable work of the Procedure Committee under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). Last Session, the Committee produced a report on public Bill procedure. Its major recommendation concerns the creation of a legislative Business Committee with considerable powers over the timetabling of Bills likely to require more than 25 hours in Standing Committee. The importance of those suggestions needs no underlining.

The House will wish to consider in due course whether it would seek to reform our public Bill procedures, taking account of these proposals. For their part, the Government, in consultation with the usual channels, will be arranging a debate reasonably soon, probably after the Christmas recess.

A second procedural matter was raised obliquely by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) last Thursday and concerns the availability of time for highly contentious legislation introduced by a private Member. The matter was underlined by the ingenious motion tabled last summer by my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden). This is a highly sensitive topic. Any alteration by the House in the Standing Orders or conventions governing the use of private Members' time, I judge, should follow after a report from the Procedure Committee.

I understand that the Procedure Committee will be considering the use of time on the Floor of the House and thus giving some attention in the coming Session to this topic. We shall await any recommendations it may make with great interest. Meanwhile, much as I admired the ingenuity of my hon. Friend the Member for Kemptown, I feel that his motion put at risk the somewhat delicate balance of time and tactics that is the feature of private Members' business. I feel that we should allow the conventions of the status quo to stand until the House has had a chance to vote on any changes which might be recommended by the Procedure Committee.

I should therefore tell the House that I would advise hon. Members to vote against a motion similar to that proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Kemptown if it were introduced again in the context of any private Member's Bill.

Since 1979, the Committees has produced a total of 275 reports, many of which have received parliamentary and notably media attention. Much of the effectiveness of Select Committees is due to the continuing and unsung labours of my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) as Chairman of the Liaison Committee. I hope that that good relationship will continue.

I have promised to say something about the possible televising of this Chamber. I have already told the Leader of the Opposition that the debate will take place later this month. Such a decision belongs to the House, uninfluenced by the Treasury Bench, but it might be helpful if I make it clear that the forthcoming debate will be to decide whether there should be an experiment in televising the proceedings of this House and, if so, to establish a Select Committee on how such an experiment might be conducted. That would broadly follow the form of previous debates on this matter. Whatever our views, I am sure that the House is united in underlining the importance of that decision.

Mr. Heffer: Will this be a one-day or a two-day debate? That is a matter of great importance to the House and we want to discuss it in some depth before we take a decision.

Mr. Biffen: I take note of that point, but it is a matter which might be more appropriately raised on tomorrow's business statement.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) reminded the House earlier this afternoon, in a speech which was generously supportive of the Government's position, that we had a formidable load of legislation ahead of us. That is undoubtedly true, as there are in prospect upwards of 30 Bills which will be at the centre of a constructive legislative programme which will further enhance the Government's position in debates in this House and elsewhere.

It has been forecast that the Session will centre on fierce controversy about law and order. I judge that many of those comments, in particular those made outside the House, were made in the context of the public order Bill. I was delighted that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) gave his support to that measure and I believe that support will be accorded generally throughout the House.

Mr. Sheerman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the House seems to have lost the economy.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Leader of the House has only just started his speech.

Mr. Biffen: I hope that the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) will exercise a modicum of patience. I was dealing with a point raised by one of his hon. Friends and I judge that to be a courtesy. Of course I will return to the economy, but I am winding up a debate which has gone on for the past week.

I should like to say a little more about Home Office affairs before moving to the economy. Although the hon. Member for Huddersfield and others would like to suggest some atavistic mood on the Government Benches, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made it clear that the genesis of the public order Bill long predates the riots in Brixton, Handsworth and Tottenham, so there can be no question of any reaction by the Government in that context. There is, of course, great public interest in that matter and the House is entitled to reflect on the reason for that interest. I believe that the domestic condition of the Labour party is as much a factor as anything else. There was a time when those in the Labour movement who led the great urban city parties were part of the solid dependable elements of Socialism. One thinks of George Lansbury, a spokesman for Christian Socialism, of Clement Attlee and of Herbert Morrison.

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate Labour Members' distaste for this argument, but they are going to hear it. Those names have now been replaced by those of Bernie Grant, Paul Boateng, Ted Knight and Derek Hatton — names as much a disgrace to the Leader of the Opposition as they are to the Government. It is their existence which puts a question mark over debates on law and order. It is legitimate to observe that in society and politics today there are radical forces determined to challenge established values and those who have the authority to uphold them.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North) *rose*——

Mr. Biffen: I shall not give way. By popular request, I am going on to the economy. We may leave the militant wing of the Labour party to carry out its scorpion role on the Labour Front Bench and those behind it. What I wish to suggest to the House is far more significant than the Hattons and the Boatengs — the public judgment made on economic management and the social values that it expresses.

The main characteristic of the Queen's Speech is that it consolidates and takes forward the main strands of policy that have been evident since 1979 — strands of policy designed to strike a balance between the liberal traditions of individual enterprise and freedom and the collective traditions of the state accepting a protective role in defence, domestic order and social welfare. The successful striking of that balance is the act which will secure consensus in public affairs without which Government in a consultative democracy cannot proceed. *[Interruption.]* I know that the very word "consensus" is embarrassing to the Labour party, floundering in search of a new sense of direction as years in opposition take it further and further from the realities of the political situation. We have sought to rebuild a consensus which, by 1979, had been shattered by high inflation and the intemperate use of trade union power.

Since 1979, we have sought constructive development in three vital areas. The first, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) has said, is the reduction of inflation. Under the Labour Government, inflation reached a peak of 26 per cent. in 1975. They now wish to dismiss and cast aside that record, hoping that it will fade from public memory, but it is there to haunt them and an indicator of what will come again if their unreconstructed policies are ever put into effect.

Today, the rate of inflation is just below 6 per cent. and, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said in his autumn statement, it is expected to fall below 4 per cent. in 1986. Central to that, of course, are responsible levels of public spending, as my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) emphasised. I was also delighted to have the endorsement of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook that the autumn statement shows no significant relaxation in control of total public spending.

Secondly, we have sought a more equitable balance in the mixed economy by encouraging private ownership in the sense of home ownership and wider share ownership. Since 1979, 800,000 public sector tenants have become owner-occupiers. Do Labour Members deplore that or is some sense of revisionism leading them to revise their stance? Assets of £6,500 million covering 400,000 employees have been transferred to private ownership since 1979.

Earlier today, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was invited to itemise all those assets that would be taken back into public ownership by a Labour Government. In a fit of modesty, presumably intended to express a desire for silence on the Benches behind him — a desire not fulfilled on this occasion — the right hon. Gentleman said absolutely nothing. That debate will be taken forward in the new housing Bill, designed further to facilitate home ownership and in the Gas Bill, affecting major assets and 90,000 employees.

In that context, I take at once the very thoughtful speech of the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr.

Sheldon) about the importance of well-judged flotation. This is, however, an argument about employee ownership, the wider casting of share ownership and the total ambivalence of the Labour party in these matters.

Thirdly, we must examine and reform the great corporate institutions which decisively influence our economy. That task was begun in the last Parliament with trade union reform. We do not know quite where the Labour party stands on that either. We do not know whether there will be a root and branch repeal or whether the matter is being kept to one side in the hope that the sheer relentless course of events and boredom might bring them to office. Heaven knows, it will never be their ideas or their policies. They are concealed behind the growing pragmatism which characterises the Leader of the Opposition.

This Queen's Speech promises major changes in areas which, although possibly less controversial than trade union reform, are nonetheless important. I have particularly in mind the financial services Bill and I should like to underline the remarks made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon) about the great importance of this legislation and its far-reaching significance. The three areas I have identified are central to the political authority of this Government, an authority that is being enhanced as Parliament proceeds. That development will be incomplete without a tangible recovery in employment. I should like the House to consider that theme, because it will feature in our debates, whatever the merits of the legislative programme. The House has a right to judge the situation.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) asserted that unemployment will be worse two years hence than it is now. I do not know whether that view is shared by the Opposition Front Bench or whether its occupants are taking their cue from the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, who has decided that silence may not be golden, but it is the best that one can contrive at this stage of the Queen's Speech. *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): What is funny about people on the dole?

Mr. Biffen: There is nothing funny about people on the dole. It is only those hon. Members who try to ensure that a speech on the topic is not heard who lend the debate a so-called spurious humour.

The level of recorded unemployment has levelled off over the last five months. Of course, that is but a modest contribution, but it is certainly a most welcome change and is in contrast to the seemingly relentless rise over the last few years. I invite Opposition Members to take encouragement, hope and optimism from the fact that we now have what seems to be an alteration in the pattern of unemployment, a levelling off after a period of increase.

Secondly, the number of jobs has risen by 600,000 since the spring of 1983 and that development is welcome. Then there is the matter of unfilled vacancies. They now stand in the latest month at the highest figure since March 1980, and show an increase of 18 per cent. over the last 18 months. In all these matters I am not resting my case on absolute figures, because unemployment figures do not have a precise exactitude. *[Interruption.]* The trend at least is a matter for serious consideration and the fact that Opposition Members squirm and shout means they do not welcome good news. They know that the one card they hold to their chest and hope to play to win the next election will be snatched away if there is a tangible and perceived recovery in employment.

I regard all of this as a question of knowing. These signs are harbingers of modest hope and they do not permit any of the harsh rhetoric of certainty. Politics with hope is perfectly legitimate and we are perfectly entitled to take satisfaction from the fact that there are now signs of a recovery, and in the hope and belief that the other policies will supplement——

Mr. Ewing: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman sought to impede the beginning of my speech and I am now going through to the peroration. I would gladly give way to him on any other evening, but not tonight, Josephine.

The House will shortly have the opportunity to pass judgment on the Queen's Speech. The Treasury Bench seeks the support of the House and the endorsement of the public for a policy which has three major objectives.

The first and central objective is the lowering of the rate of inflation, partnered by an improvement in total employment. Those are not only economic goals, but social imperatives. Stable prices are the precondition for equity and justice in a society. Furthermore, there is now tangible evidence that inflation can be contained and reduced while employment within the economy begins to rise. Of course, these are early days to judge the extent and nature of the recovery in employment. Even so, the increase of 600,000 jobs during the past two and a half years should be welcomed.

Secondly, the Gracious Speech commends to the House and the nation the belief that ownership should be widely spread. We shall debate this—I shall repeat it many times, because it is central to the public debate—in the context of taxation, knowing that taxation supremely concentrates resources and their use in the hands of politicians and officials at the expense of the individual. I should tell the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) that the present level of taxation bears especially heavily on many working-class people who earn below average wages. In 1938, they would not have been touched by the income tax structure. In no way do I regard it as an immoral crusade to try to rectify the matter.

However, in this Session of Parliament, the issues of ownership will be most keenly contested in the arguments over the Gas Bill. We look forward to that debate so that the public may then judge on the merits between state-financed monopoly and private shareholding with an emphasis on employee ownership. If Opposition Members find the concept of employee ownership so distasteful, let them make that clear in the many debates that we shall have on this issue. The issue will be extrapolated into questions such as who stands for concentration, who stands for central control, who stands for the encroaching authority of Whitehall and the politicians and who, at the end of the day, believes in employees having an interest in their firms?

Thirdly, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer mentioned in his autumn statement, the Government are committed to a level of public spending consistent with our economic performance. The Tory party is not hostile to the positive and protective role of the state and the honest financing of such responsibilities. The autumn statement points to

[Mr. Biffen]

increased spending on public sector housing renovation, science, hospitals, roads and overseas aid. That substantial increase in public spending properly sets out the Government's priority commitments. Furthermore, the planned increases in public capital spending should be set alongside a substantial increase in private sector capital spending, and, more especially, in manufacturing industry.

The autumn statement repudiates those who have parodied the Government's policies as negatively Victorian. However, as the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook will agree, there is this difference between the two sides of the House on this topic: the autumn statement is the result of a discipline on total spending — a discipline that the right hon. Gentleman kindly reinforced in his remarks this afternoon. It is the product thereafter of a choice of priorities.

Furthermore, the figures are related to an expected growth in national resources able to bear the burden. Those economic judgments and disciplines will keep us from the humiliating recourse to the International Monetary Fund experienced by Britain in 1976. That will always haunt Labour Members, for there is nothing more humiliating than to have to ask the IMF for its imprimatur for the policies which they knew in their hearts they would have to carry out but with which they did not have the kidney to confront their supporters.

As this debate has proceeded, it has become clear that the Labour Benches have a nostalgia for the past. The dreamland is the so-called Wilson Socialism of 1966-70. It has the memories of growing public expenditure, economic planning and the centralised control of prices and incomes. It was the Labour party that existed before the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) frightened the life out of the revisionists after 1970. The Leader of the Opposition is yearning to return to such a Wilson era. Thus, the emerging pragmatist would make rendezvous with Labour's master pragmatist. There he will find waiting for him the right hon. Member for Devonport. However, we have an alternative to such a barren reunion and that alternative is in the Queen's Speech, for which we shall vote.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 223, Noes 351.

Division No. 3] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife, Central)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McCusker, Harold
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger

Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. Mark Fisher

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*

Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 35 (Calling of amendments at end of debate), at the end of the Question to add:

But humbly regret that the Gracious Speech contains no evidence that the Government seriously plans to tackle Britain's most fundamental problems; believes that further action is needed to stimulate manufacturing industry through a cut in interest rates and a more competitive exchange rate via sterling's entry into the exchange rate mechanism of the European Monetary System; and calls on the Government to seek a reduction in unemployment through selective capital investment, a fair and durable incomes strategy, lower employers' National Insurance contributions, and an expansion of the community programme and skill training.—*[Mr. Cartwright.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 33, Noes 350.

Division No. 4] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Freud, Clement
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Livsey, Richard
McCusker, Harold
Maclennan, Robert
Maginnis, Ken
Meadowcroft, Michael
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Penhaligon, David
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Wainwright, R.
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cartwright and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert

King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Maclennan, Robert
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question put:—
The House divided: Ayes 329, Noes 25.

Division No. 5] **[10.30 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael

Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Freud, Clement
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Livsey, Richard
McCusker, Harold
Maginnis, Ken
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nicholson, J.
Penhaligon, David
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*

Te
Mr. WillianRossand
Mr. Clifford Forsythe.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

To be presented by Privy Councillors or Members of Her Majesty's Household.

Anglo-Irish Talks

10.42 pm

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It relates to the point of order that I raised earlier today with regard to the conclusion of the Anglo-Irish talks. As the Prime Minister is still in the Chamber, is she prepared now to inform right hon. and hon. Members, since further information has become available in Belfast, that she has surrendered to the Irish Republic? This information is contained in a newspaper article relating to locating agents of the Irish Republic in Belfast.

Mr. Speaker: That is patently not a matter for me. I know nothing of it.

Foreign Compensation (Czechoslovakia) Order 1982

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

10.44 pm

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): I am grateful for the opportunity of this Adjournment debate, and I know that that pleasure will be shared by many British citizens with connections with Czechoslovakia. I am also grateful to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), for being here. This is the first opportunity for him to address the House from that august position on the Front Bench. All my hon. Friends will join me in wishing him the very best and thanking him for coming tonight.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) has my agreement to contribute to the debate, as well as the agreement and permission of the Minister.

The Foreign Compensation (Czechoslovakia) Order 1982 came into being through recognition by the British Government of the need to recompense British citizens forced by circumstance to leave Czechoslovakia in 1948 following the deposition of Benes and Masaryk. Several were British-born, for example the British wives of Czech men who had returned to Czechoslovakia following the second world war. Most of those who left Czechoslovakia were forced by necessity to leave only with such belongings as they could carry. Their escape to Britain was made even more difficult as many who were not Communist supporters had their passports confiscated immediately after the coup of February 1948. Forced by circumstances to leave the country, taking with them only what they could carry, most left the greater part of their belongings in Czechoslovakia, including the furnishings of their Czech homes. Those possessions were often forfeited by the Czech authorities, and in the 1940s no payment or compensation was given for that loss.

The Czech Government, after many years of negotiations, paid the sum of £24 million to the British Government, of which approximately £4 million has been set aside for the Foreign Compensation (Czechoslovakia) Order 1982. All of us in the House should acknowledge the success of those negotiations, which have carried on for many years. At least there was a positive result in the end — in other words, the compensation paid by the Government of Czechoslovakia.

All claims had to reach the Foreign Compensation Commission by 31 August 1983, and I understand that 2,204 claims have been lodged. Once submitted, a claim is given a preliminary assessment and, if it is felt to be justified, evidence has to be submitted to back up the claim. A determination of the amount of compensation can then be made. Once all the cases have been provisionally determined, they all require reviewing before a final award is made, because, if the claims exceed £4 million, successful applicants are paid a proportion of the amount set aside for compensation. Therefore, all determinations must be made before a final figure for the amount of compensation to any one applicant can be reached.

There was, and is, however, a major stumbling block in the way of most applicants in that the burden of proof rests with the applicant. According to the order, he has to

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

show that the property in question had been affected by a Czechoslovak measure. As might be imagined, proving, after 40 years, that one's property was affected by a Czechoslovak measure is no easy matter and, by the end of September this year, of the 2,204 claims received by the Foreign Compensation Commission, 620 or about 30 per cent. had been processed, of which only 173 had been provisionally awarded compensation totalling approximately £285,000. In the two years following the final date for the submission of applications, therefore, fewer than one third have been dealt with.

To alleviate the burden of proof placed upon applicants, the Foreign Compensation Commission has frequently turned to the Czech Government for evidence, and it is there that many applications for compensation can encounter difficulties. Why that should be so is best explained by reference to the case of Mrs. Delia Hak, a British citizen who was forced to leave Czechoslovakia in 1948 and who lives in my constituency, where she was born.

Mrs. Hak married a Czech army officer in July 1945, and the newly married couple moved to Prague in October of the same year, taking £800 which had been left to Mrs. Hak in her father's will. With that money and additional funds occasionally sent by Mrs. Hak's mother, Mrs. Hak completely furnished their Prague home. After the coup in 1948 and having been put under pressure—Mr. Hak believes that they were put under surveillance by the Czech authorities—they decided that it would be better for them to leave the country.

In the late spring of 1948, Mrs. Hak succeeded in leaving Czechoslovakia by train on a Czech passport but Mr. Hak was unable to leave. In November 1948, Mr. Hak succeeded in escaping across the border, leaving behind all of the effects of the Prague flat. On leaving Czechoslovakia, he worked for the British Government. Mrs. Hak, wishing to claim compensation for the loss of the effects in the Prague flat, had to rely on the Czech Government to furnish the compensation commission with evidence to uphold her claim.

The Czech authorities replied to the commission's request saying that the Prague people's court had passed a sentence on Mr. Hak on 8 February 1954 ordering the forfeiture of all of the couple's goods to the state. However, the Czech authorities added that they had never taken possession of the effects of the Prague flat as they had been sold previously to Mr. Hak's father, which the authorities claim is proven by an affidavit signed by his father on 20 September 1950.

Mrs. Hak's claim has therefore been dismissed, although my constituents claim that the evidence submitted is incorrect. The 1982 order leaves little discretion to the commissioners. As the Hak's case stands, they are without firm evidence, so they are without compensation. Of all of the requests for information sent to the Czech Government, about 900 still await reply. Applicants who have received a reply from Czechoslovakia are not always as displeased with the outcome as my constituent. Indeed, the Commission has several cases on file of applicants whose cases appeared hopeless until the Czech Government supplied information which revealed that they are entitled to compensation. They appear to be doing their best to have the compensation problem sorted out as thoroughly as possible. Unfortunately, however, such thoroughness takes time, and time is one of the applicants' greatest enemies as many are well into their 70's.

My first request is that the Order should be reviewed to alter the burden of proof and to give the commissioners greater discretion. My second request is that my hon. Friend the Minister should set a realistic target date to clear all claims. Probably the most difficult part of the Order for claimants is the section concerning pensions. Of the 500 or so claims that have been made for compensation in respect of loss of pensions, the commission believes that less than one dozen will probably be successful.

The commission has found article 21 of the Order, which relates to pensions, too rigid for successful implementation because social security systems are different all over the world, and that to decide whether payment of the pension had been stopped

"in accordance with the rules governing the payment of the pension"

is almost impossible. Many left Czechoslovakia before the payment of their pension started, so they are really claiming for pension contributions. Hence those who claim for loss of pension have almost no chance of success. There was obviously a need for compensation for loss of pensions otherwise the article would not have been included in the Order. It would now seem foolish not to pay out that compensation because the conditions of the Order were drafted too rigidly.

My third request, therefore, is that the Order should be reviewed with special reference to pensions. It will be appreciated that many of those now claiming compensation, including that for loss of pensions, are senior citizens who cannot afford, financially or physically, to wait for years before any payments are made. As the rules of the order stand, no final substantial payment can be made until all the claims have been finally determined and then reviewed.

The difference between the amounts claimed and the amount available is illustrated by the fact that the original claims totalled £21 million but that the commission has provision to pay only £4 million in compensation. If a substantial interim payment could be made, however, it would be of great benefit to those awaiting the final review. It would alleviate some hardship and reduce, if not eliminate, concern on the part of the claimants. My fourth and final request is, therefore, that substantial interim awards should be made.

In conclusion, I call upon my hon. Friend the Minister to take whatever action he feels is necessary to ensure a more rapid procedure of the claims system, to consider a review of the order at the earliest possible date with a view to altering the present overly rigid conditions with regard to burden of proof and pension compensation, and to consider making substantial interim payments. I appreciate that there are problems in that the commission must frequently rely upon the Czechoslovak Government to provide information and that this causes complication and delay, but the money in the commission's fund is now British money and should be awarded at the discretion of the British Government and not of the Government of Czechoslovakia.

10.56 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) for allowing me to intervene briefly in the

debate. I pay warm tribute to him for the clear and forceful way in which he has put the case, which I wholeheartedly support.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will know that I recently took a deputation of Czech ex-service men, including squadron leader Ludikar from my constituency, to see the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton).

I associate myself with the plea made by my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering that the pension provisions especially be reviewed, for the good reason that many of these Czech ex-service men fought with the greatest gallantry and distinction alongside British armed forces and, in some cases, in British units in the second world war, and I can think of no group more deserving of equitable treatment in regard to their pensions. The problem is getting information out of Czechoslovakia to justify their claims which, in all equity, should be met.

10.57 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Timothy Eggar): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) for initiating this debate and to my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) for his contribution to it. I know that my hon. Friends the Members for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) and for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) would have liked to be here and that they, too, have been very active on behalf of constituents affected by the order.

I recognise that a significant number of people who suffered losses in Czechoslovakia a long time ago are interested in these questions and hope to receive compensation for their losses; I very much sympathise with them.

The House will be aware that the negotiations with Czechoslovakia which led to the signature of an agreement on 29 January 1982 were extremely complicated and lengthy. They began in 1949 and had many ups and downs. Their successful conclusion was not wholly within our gift nor that of the Czechoslovaks. The French and United States Governments were holding their own bilateral negotiations with the Czechoslovaks at the same time and there was a higher degree of interdependence between the three sets of negotiations.

Although the Order is long and complicated, its principal purpose is straightforward enough. It entrusts to the Foreign Compensation Commission the task of receiving applications to share in the distribution of the compensation received from Czechoslovakia. It reviews and values those claims and deals with the distribution of compensation to claimants in proportion to the valuation assigned by the commission to their claims.

As my hon. Friend has said, the total sum of money handed to the Foreign Compensation Commission for private claimants in October 1982, was almost £4 million. I am pleased to tell the House that with interest that sum now stands at almost £4·75 million. The 1982 Order gave applicants 12 months in which to make their claims to share in the compensation. A large number did so. Whereas our negotiations with the Czechoslovaks had been concerned with only 1,254 private claims with a face value of some £6 million, no fewer than 2,204 persons applied to take part in the distribution. My hon. Friend might like to know that the nominal value of the applications filed up to the closing date, 31 August 1983, had risen to some £21 million rather than the £6 million which we were previously talking about.

I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering spoke of his concern about the pace at which the Foreign Compensation Commission is reaching decisions. Indeed, he has asked me to review the whole order, with a view both to altering the burden of proof placed upon the applicants and also to setting a target date for the clearance of all the claims. While I share my hon. Friend's concern that matters should be speeded up, I am sorry to have to say that there is no possibility of altering the burden of proof. That must still rest upon the applicants. It seems to me proper that in the case of this order, as with all similar orders, it should be the responsibility of the claimant to establish his own claim. No one else can shoulder that responsibility.

My hon. Friend has spoken of the requests for information in support of claims which the Foreign Compensation Commission have made to the Czechoslovak authorities. Provision was made for that in our agreement with Czechoslovakia. That provision has been of substantial benefit to us and to the claimants. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the response that we have received from the Czechoslovak Government. Many of the replies they were able to give us were valuable. So far, they have sent 578 replies to the 1,700 requests made by the Foreign Compensation Commission. On further reflection, the commision has withdrawn 225 of those requests and the balance outstanding is still some 900.

I should emphasise to my hon. Friend that we have sought additional information from the Czechoslovak authorities which the claimants were unable to provide. We asked for that additional information in order to verify the claims. We have not asked the Czechoslovak authorities to verify documents produced by the claimants. The information supplied by the Czechoslovak authorities is treated as evidence which may or may not support the claim, and is read in conjunction with the applicant's own submission. Nothing can replace the applicant's own submission. I should like to make that clear. That submission is of primary and fundamental importance to the whole procedure.

As I said, I share my hon. Friend's regret that it has not been possible to proceed faster. In many cases, the difficulty has lain in the 40 years which have elapsed between deprivation and the moment of claim, and the slowness with which evidence has been coming forward. However, I have to say that it has often been in the claimants' own interest to allow adequate time for the production of such evidence.

My hon. Friend invited me to set a realistic target date for the clearance of all claims. However, as I know my hon. Friend is aware, the FCC is independent in these matters, and I hope he will understand my reluctance to accept his invitation. At this stage, it is better to concentrate upon ways and means of speeding up the procedures of the FCC and the rate at which it makes determinations. The commission is already considering ways of doing that, and I trust that it will be successful. I hope that it will feel able to reach at least provisional decisions in some cases without waiting for replies from Czechoslovakia, especially where the request for information was sent to the Czechslovaks some time ago.

[Mr. Timothy Eggar]

My hon. Friend gave details of the claims for compensation which Mr. and Mrs. Hak have made to the FCC, and he referred to the sad circumstances which led to that claim being made. As he knows, the claimants have put their cases to the commission and the legal channels open to them are not yet exhausted. This being so, I hope that my hon. Friend will understand when I say that it would not be right for me to comment here upon either case.

My hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood asked that there should be a review of the order in so far as it bears upon pension claims. I realise that some claimants were members of the allied armed forces during the second world war and gave distinguished and gallant service then. They have since come to Britain and made their homes here, but they were not British nationals at the relevant time when they lost their pension rights in Czechoslovakia and so, sadly, do not qualify under the provisions of the Czechoslovakia order. I must tell my hon. Friend that we reviewed this matter very carefully last year, when we received representations from my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) and concluded that it would be wrong to amend article 21 of the order, which bears upon pension claims. I will explain briefly the reasons behind our decision.

In preparing the 1982 order, the Government thought it right to make provision for some of the compensation received under the 1982 agreement with Czechoslovakia to be used for the benefit of the very limited category of pension claimants described in article 21. Since we had been negotiating with the Czechoslovak Government about compensation for the loss of British property, it was inevitable that the text of this article should be drawn in such a way as to benefit only those who met a strict British nationality requirement.

We also had a duty to consider the position of all the other claimants under this order. We could not act to their detriment without having a sound legal justification for this. In the present case, we concluded that such a legal justification did not exist and that it would not be proper for us to attempt to relax the nationality requirement. All other claims under this order are subject to a strict nationality test based on international law. That has been our consistent practice in all orders in Council providing for the distribution of compensation moneys received from other Governments. I am sorry to disappoint my hon. Friend, but I do not believe it would be right for us to reconsider the decision that we reviewed as recently as a year ago.

My hon. Friend also asked me to consider the case for a substantial interim payment to claimants. I listened carefully to what he said and have much sympathy with him. As he argued, all the claimants have already been waiting a very long time. Nevertheless, it may be prudent for the commission to make more progress on the claims before considering an interim payment. The commission is not even halfway through its work. I remind him that there have so far only been 630 decisions in 2,200 outstanding cases.

However, I do not wish my hon. Friend to think that I oppose the idea of an interim payment. If the facts support it, I will be prepared to suggest a substantial interim payment to the FCC at the appropriate time. If I do so, I shall have to bear in mind the fact that an interim payment or payments would necessarily involve a diversion of administrative resources from the commission's principal task of determining these claims as quickly as possible.

If procedures can be devised for the more speedy determination of these claims and swift progress proves possible; it might be better for the commission to press ahead and reach provisional decisions in all cases before calculating how much can be paid to each claimant. We should preserve an open mind on this issue until we see whether or not the Commission can make better progress over the next few months. I can assure my hon. Friends that I shall be keeping a very close watch on this.

Finally, my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering has emphasised that all these claims are a matter for British decision. I agree with him, and so does the FCC. Primarily, the commission's responsibilities are involved here. I acknowledge and to some extent agree with my hon. Friend's disappointment at the rate of reaching decisions under the order during the first two years since the closing date for the submission of claims — since mid-1983. I hope that the commission will be able to follow procedures that will inject more speed into this exercise. I attach importance to its doing so in order that claimants may receive compensation in the near future.

The commission is already aware of my concern and that of my hon. Friends who have spoken tonight and of other hon. Members who have been involved with this over the years. I have no doubt that it will respond to the concern expressed in the debate. I am sure that it will be reading carefully what has been said tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eleven minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 14 November 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Health and Social Services

1. **Rev. Martin Smyth** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his plans for future health and social services provision in Northern Ireland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): The Department of Health and Social Services will shortly be issuing new strategic planning guidelines which will set parameters for the area boards' strategic plans on which the Department's new regional strategic plan for the period 1987 to 1992 will be based.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I appreciate that that is movement of a kind. Under the new consultancy arrangements, will the Department now have to consult the Irish Republic? In such consultation, is it possible that the Department will come down in favour of the Western area board, or on behalf of a firm in my constituency which has been owed £16,000 since May by that board, which has refused to pay, claiming that the Government will not give the board the money?

Mr. Needham: The guidelines are a long-established process. I hope that it will be possible to discuss them fully with all concerned so that they may be published in the near future. I acknowledge the success of the Western area board in its efforts to save money. I am not aware of the particular case that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, but I shall look into it. There has been no cut in the amount of money to the Western area board, and I see no reasons why it should not be able to fulfil its financial commitments.

Mr. John David Taylor: Will the Minister now answer the question that he was asked? Will the Government of another country, following the Cabinet decision this morning, be consulted on these matters?

Mr. Needham: I answered the question by saying that the guidelines are a long-established process agreed through the Department of Health and Social Services. We are continuing on that basis.

Mr. Peter Robinson: The Minister said that he would be consulting others. Will he say whether included in those "others" are the Government of the Irish Republic?

Mr. Needham: As I said, a statement will be forthcoming——[HON. MEMBERS: "When?"] This has nothing to do with the issue of the regional guidelines. I referred to consultation, and I hope that that will be with Members of this House, with Members of the Assembly and with those involved in the health profession.

Public Expenditure

2. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are his proposals for public spending in Ulster for the year 1986-87.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his autumn statement on Tuesday that the planned total of public expenditure in Northern Ireland in 1986-87 would be 4·52 billion. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will announce the detailed allocations to Northern Ireland programmes as soon as decisions on these have been taken.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Has not the high provision of public expenditure in Ulster on education and housing and in many other areas over the years enabled successive Governments to avoid securing a full political settlement? Is it not fair to say that for decades the people of Ulster have been bought off by public expenditure which has been out of proportion to public expenditure in other parts of the United Kingdom, such as the northern region?

Dr. Boyson: The hon. Gentleman referred to housing and education. The average teacher-pupil ratio is still one more in Northern Ireland than anywhere else in the United Kingdom. I agree that the housing situation is not satisfactory. The figure for Northern Ireland is 10·4 per cent., compared with 6·4 per cent. for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What about unemployment?

Dr. Boyson: I have the figures. If the hon. Gentleman will listen, I will give them to him. The rate of unemployment in Cumbria is 12·8 per cent. In Northern Ireland it is 20·5 per cent. Nobody wants deprivation or unemployment anywhere. However, it does not help for an hon. Member to blame other areas, when those other areas are sharing the problems of the present time.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my hon. Friend accept that many hon. Members would argue that the expenditure levels are about right? Is he able to provide the House with details of both internal and external expenditure for the Province? Will my hon. Friend accept from me that there is considerable admiration for the work that he has done during the last 12 months in the Province? — *[Interruption.]* I can say that with absolute honesty and with no prejudice whatsoever. There is great admiration for what my hon. Friend has done and is doing in the Province.

Dr. Boyson: I am trying to withhold my blushes from my hon. Friend, with whom, obviously, I have had no contact over a long period of time. I am sure that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) will agree that what we all want, both in his area and in Northern Ireland, is internal and external investment in new, high technology industries which will provide employment and prosperity both in his area and in Northern Ireland. During the past year the first Japanese and Hong Kong firms have come to Northern Ireland. Furthermore, about one in eight people are now employed by American-owned firms. I hope that both in Workington and in Cumbria——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman ought to deal with the region.

Dr. Boyson: Very well, I shall deal with the region. I am trying to help the hon. Gentleman. Both in Cumbria and in Northern Ireland there is a need for investment, prosperity and less unemployment. There is a need in those areas for public expenditure.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Will the internal allocation of these sums be influenced by, or be the subject of, consultation, under formal arrangements, with the Government of the Irish Republic?

Dr. Boyson: The decision about the money going into the Northern Ireland block will be made by Northern Ireland Ministers.

Assembly Elections

3. **Mr. Bell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he proposes to announce the dates of the elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Nicholas Scott): We shall be considering the future of the Northern Ireland Assembly during the coming months.

Mr. Bell: I had hoped to be responding to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and congratulating him on coming to the Dispatch Box in his new post. We are sure that he will bring to it the dedication and energy for which he is well noted.

Does the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State agree that, in the deliberations relating to elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Assembly should reflect the views of the people in Northern Ireland via Northern Ireland politicians, duly elected? Will he confirm that if the Assembly is to be kept in being, appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that political parties, such as the SDLP, will be properly represented and will be able to take their duly elected seats?

Mr. Scott: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have heard the kind remarks of the hon. Gentleman and will be grateful for them.

If the Assembly is to continue in existence, of course we shall seek to ensure that all those who are involved in constitutional politics and who wish to stand for election should be able to do so. It is up to the representatives of the Social Democratic and Labour party to decide whether they wish to do so and to take their seats.

Mr. Molyneaux: In view of the rubber stamp decision that was taken by the Cabinet this morning, is the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State a free agent? Are the hon. Gentleman and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in a position to take a decision on that or any other matter?

Mr. Scott: The right hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members may have heard things on radio or television or read about them in the newspapers. If there is to be any such agreement, as is rumoured, I recommend the House to read its terms carefully and to listen to any statement that is made to the House of Commons.

Mr. Peter Robinson: If, as the Minister hinted in Omagh, the Nationalist community is to be given a veto on the Stormont structures, will the Unionist community be given a veto on Anglo-Irish structures which may be based at Stormont?

Mr. Scott: I made no suggestion in Omagh about any veto for any party. I said that the suggestions that had been put forward and upon which I was commenting would merit careful consideration by the Government.

Mr. McNamara: Is the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State aware that I cannot understand this furore about what appear to me to be very modest proposals, which are nevertheless a step in the right direction? In any review of the role of the Assembly, will the Government pay careful attention to the amendments that were put down to the original Bill by the official Opposition and consider bringing them into operation so that there is proper repesentation within the Assembly, which the SDLP will then be prepared to enter?

Mr. Scott: When we reach the stage of coming to a decision about the Assembly, I am sure that there will be widespread discussions and that all views will be taken into account. However, I have to make the same reply to the hon. Gentleman as I gave to others: wait and see.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Does my hon. Friend hold out any good prospect of devolving further functions to the Assembly on the far side of the elections—assuming, of course, that the duly elected Members take their places and attend?

Mr. Scott: The main task of the Assembly was to produce widely acceptable proposals for a system of devolved government. It is a matter of regret that no proposals that would have commanded widespread acceptance across the community have yet been put forward.

Scheduled Offences (Royal Prerogative of Mercy)

4. **Mr. J. Enoch Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will review his practice in releasing under the royal prerogative of mercy persons imprisoned for scheduled offences.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): No, Sir.

Mr. Powell: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the justified public indignation that is excited by these unexplained decisions will become tenfold when it is known that they are open to the influence of Ministers of the Irish Republic? That will infuriate those who regard them as insults that are directed at those who have been bereaved or injured.

Mr. King: On the first part of the right hon. Gentleman's question, I understand that it has never been the practice to give reasons for the exercise of the royal prerogative, and I confirm that I propose to maintain that position.

In respect of any speculation into which the right hon. Gentleman entered in the second part of his question, I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State.

Mr. William Ross: In the right hon. Gentleman's speech to the East Belfast rotary club he said that the Government had already taken into account questions and points of concern put to him by the Irish Republic. Did he

mean that the Government were already doing what the Irish Republic wanted them to do, as well as being prepared to do it in future?

Mr. King: No, Sir.

Rev. William McCrea: Will the right hon. Gentleman say whether his decisions will be influenced by the formal arrangements with the Irish Republic?

Mr. King: I say again what I have already said—that I urge the House to study the details and the consequences of any agreement, should there be one, before entering into any judgments.

Constitutional Reform

6. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on recent meetings he has had with Ministers in the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

7. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the talks with the Republic of Ireland Government.

14. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest negotiations with the Government of the Irish Republic over Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I met Mr. Barry, the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, on 17 September in Dublin and on 7 October and 6 November in London. I was accompanied on the last two occasions by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. The aim of the talks has been to deepen our relationship with the Republic in ways that will benefit both communities in Northern Ireland. They have been taking place on the basis that there can be no change in the status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom without the consent of a majority there, and that there can be no derogation from sovereignty on the part of the Government of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Latham: With regard to the forthcoming summit, what steps will my right hon. Friend take to carry with him the elected representatives of the majority community in Northern Ireland? Should they not already have been properly consulted?

Mr. King: As my hon. Friend knows, any negotiations between sovereign states must inevitably be conducted with some degree of confidentiality. However, I have sought to take the opportunity at least to explain the background—for example, as I did in answer to my hon. Friend's main question—and the framework within which such talks have taken place. I am anxious that, at the earliest opportunity, the consequences of any agreement will be put fairly before the elected representatives of all parties in the House.

Mr. Leigh: Does my right hon. Friend agree that in the absence of an agreement between the two Governments, those who would rejoice most would be the Sinn Fein terrorists? They would do so because it would set back closer co-operation between the two Governments on terrorism, and because they would immediately seek to undermine the SDLP by saying that the minority community could hope for no progress through constitutional means.

Mr. King: It certainly must be in the interests of all those in the Province and in the United Kingdom generally that we ensure that constitutional means triumph and that terrorism is defeated. It is clear from their published statements that those who aspire to terrorist approaches are extremely concerned about any chance of better co-operation between the Irish Republic and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Winnick: Would it not have been better if the House had been kept fully informed, instead of being faced with all the leaks and rumours that have been flying about? Is the Secretary of State aware that we shall judge any Anglo-Irish agreement on how far constitutional progress is made in Northern Ireland, and that we shall not be swayed by the hysteria that we are likely to witness on the Unionist Benches?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman will have heard me explain why discussions of this sort between sovereign Governments have inevitably to be conducted confidentially. I hope that any judgment that is made on any agreement will not be made in the absence of the full facts, and will not be based on what may be leaks, rumours or slanted impressions from certain quarters. I hope that everyone who cares about the future prosperity of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom will recognise his responsibility to await the facts that may emerge from any agreement and then to judge the agreement fairly on its merits.

Mr. McCusker: I hope that the Secretary of State was not suggesting that I am not concerned about my future, my children's future and my constituents' future in Northern Ireland. If, as we assume will be confirmed, the Secretary of State has conceded the right of a permanent presence of representatives of the Irish Republic in Northern Ireland, will he advise me how to reassure my constituents that those agents of a Government who lay claim to jurisdiction over Northern Ireland will not be working to further the territorial ambitions of that Government? Would it not be natural for such representatives to do so?

Mr. King: With the responsibilities that I have the honour to hold, I fully share the hon. Gentleman's concern for his family and the well-being of all those in Northern Ireland. In such a situation, it is all too easy to stir up passion, fear and prejudice that can be turned easily to violence and tragedy. I believe that I am entitled to ask those who have been elected to represent others in the Province at least to suspend their judgment until they have seen the terms of any agreement that may be reached. We shall then be able to decide whether such fears are justified.

Mr. Stanbrook: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, despite what he has said, any legal obligation to consult a foreign state about a matter within Britain's domestic jurisdiction will be a derogation of sovereignty and will need precise statutory authority, on the lines of the European Communities Act 1972?

Mr. King: I know that my hon. Friend, with his legal training, will be the first to say that advice should never be given without having seen the full terms of any agreement. I know that I can look to him to consider these

matters objectively and to form his judgment on the facts of any agreement that may emerge, and not on hypothesis, assumption and rumour.

Mr. Mason: During the meetings between the Secretary of State and his ministerial colleagues and Ministers of the Republic, did they at any time promise any relinquishment, to any degree, of the British Government's sovereignty over the government of the Province? The right hon. Gentleman should take the opportunity now to clear the air on that issue.

Mr. King: I think the right hon. Gentleman will understand that he puts me in an extremely difficult position. I have explained clearly—*[Interruption.]*—that the substance of any discussion between sovereign states must be confidential. I take note, obviously, of the issue that he has raised. He will have to make his own judgment on any agreement that is reached.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Has the Secretary of State not contributed to the rising tension in Northern Ireland by not consulting the representatives of the Unionist community over the past 12 months—those who will be affected—while the SDLP leader, some Conservative Members, the Secretary of State to the Vatican, the President of the United States, the United Nations and the European Community have been consulted? If there is not consent for the agreement in Northern Ireland, does he believe that he can govern Northern Ireland?

Mr. King: Throughout our discussions, we have observed the necessary requirements of confidentiality. I understand the concern, but my first act on walking into the office in Stormont was to write personal letters to all the leaders in the Province to invite them to come and talk. I only regret that the hon. Gentleman and his party refused to accept that offer.

Mr. Maginnis: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that a young policeman was shot and critically injured in my constituency this morning, and that it has already been established that the gunmen made good their escape across the frontier to the haven of the Irish Republic? Does the right hon. Gentleman really believe that, by conceding territorial rights to the Irish Republic, there will be better security on the frontier? If so, does he believe that that country can be a good neighbour when for 16 years it has allowed slaughter to take place across its frontier and has to wait for political advantage to make amends?

Mr. King: I made it clear—and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman listened to my original answer—that there is no question of conceding territorial rights. I note the hon. Gentleman's belief that there could be a considerable advance in security if it were possible to achieve improved co-operation between the Republic and the Government of the United Kingdom relating to border problems. I understand that point, and I share the hon. Gentleman's view.

Mr. Crouch: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us are growing tired of those who would constantly put up barriers against a solution and seek to deny advantages to the minority as well as to the majority in Northern Ireland? Will he bear in mind that the future of the people of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom is a matter that will be decided by this Parliament of the United Kingdom?

Mr. King: I note what my hon. Friend says. We are all Members of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, and we should support it. There are strong feelings over this matter at a time when there is still uncertainty about the content of the agreement. I hope that those most closely in touch with people in Northern Ireland and who have a position of responsibility will recognise that. Hon. Members will recognise the difficulties of their position, but we are entitled to look to such people to show responsibility as well.

Mr. Flannery: Is it not a fact that the British people can see no end to the trouble in Northern Ireland, and that it is in that context that the British Government are having discussions with the Republic of Ireland? Is not the cause of the trouble that during 50 years of strife, and 16 years of the troubles, the Unionist party when in power would not treat the minority party in the proper democratic manner? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that even now, sitting behind me and across the Floor of the House, such people are proving intractable and still have the same opinions as they have had all the time—the opinions that cause the trouble?

Mr. King: This is not the occasion to decide where all the blame should be allocated. The purpose of any talks with the Government of the Republic is to see whether we can find a way to deepen our relationship, to the advantage of all those who live in the Province, in the United Kingdom and in the island of Ireland. I hope that every hon. Member will ultimately share that objective.

Mr. Bell: Will the Secretary of State note that constructive progress to reduce alienation and provide reassurance for the genuine anxieties in the communities of Northern Ireland is worthy of our support? Will he also note that violence by word or deed would be a form of pre-judging agreements that may be entered into, and would not only jeopardise sensible discussions, but would be construed as a demonstration of weakness on the part of the perpetrators—weakness in the sense that they would not believe in their own argument? Will the Secretary of State further confirm that no one in Northern Ireland has anything to fear from peaceful progress towards the solutions of its long-standing problems?

Mr. King: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind words of welcome, which he delivered via my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. I appreciate them. Obviously, the purpose of any agreement is to ensure that by constitutional means the constitutional parties can achieve advance, and that the men of violence will not succeed. Those are the key components of our approach, and I hope that they will ultimately commend themselves to all parties in the House.

Devolution

8. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards devolved government in Northern Ireland in the light of the publication of the third report from the Devolution Report Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Mr. Tom King: The Government believe that a new devolved administration which the constitutional parties would be willing to operate together would have much to offer. I am studying the report against that background.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Have there not been too many abortive attempts at devolved government since the abolition of Stormont? Will my right hon. Friend concentrate on administrative devolution, and govern this integral part of the United Kingdom as though it were an integral part?

Mr. King: Obviously I shall take careful note of the third report, which has been sent to me. I understand that it was sent to me as a basis for negotiation, and that the parties in the Assembly have made it clear that they are not committed to any of its details. I have undertaken to study it carefully, and I shall do so.

Mr. William Ross: Does the Secretary of State realise that if there is passion on this Bench today it is because the hon. Members on this Bench, more than any others, know exactly what will flow from the agreement which has been so widely published? We are worried because we know exactly what the results of it will be. What will the Secretary of State, the Government and the House do when we are proved to be correct?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman says that he knows exactly what the details are, and that the report has been widely published. Neither statement is correct. Part of the complaint that I have had to deal with is that hon. Members have been kept in the dark. If there is an agreement, will the hon. Gentleman please study its terms carefully, and not rush into judgment until he has had a chance to look at the facts?

Security

9. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security and safety aspects in various council chambers following the election of various Sinn Fein councillors.

Mr. Scott: Representations have been made to Ministers that the election of Sinn Fein councillors may have prejudiced the security of other councillors and of council employees. The situation is being kept under review.

Mr. Bruinvels: Is it not worrying that so many Unionist members who are in the majority on their councils, have now adjourned those council meetings throughout Ulster? At present, 17 councils are not sitting. Some people may say that while the councils have been adjourned nothing has happened and, therefore, they have not been needed, but would it not be better if we proscribed the IRA and Sinn Fein council members, and ensured that they could not stand for office in future?

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, is meeting a large number of deputations from various councils within Northern Ireland and, in due course, will report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about that. On the substance of my hon. Friend's original question, obviously I recognise the fears, sometimes exaggerated, of those on councils. I wish to emphasise that any individual who feels that he may be at risk can raise that matter with the Royal Ulster Constabulary, which will be ready to give him appropriate advice.

Mr. John David Taylor: Since 16 of the 26 local councils in Northern Ireland are now on strike, does the Minister accept that his policy has failed? Does he recognise that he practises double standards by refusing to meet Sinn Fein representatives, yet demanding that the elected councillors in Northern Ireland should work with Sinn Fein?

Mr. Scott: I do not recognise that. There is a difference between elected representatives on councils who have competed with Sinn Fein members, and those responsible centrally for governing Northern Ireland, who try to draw the greatest disinction, within the law, between those who follow constitutional politics and those who reject constitutional politics. As to the other part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I refer him to what I said earlier.

Rev. William McCrea: Is the Minister aware of how many Sinn Fein council members in Northern Ireland are wanted by the RUC for murder? How many of them are well-known murderers who have blood on their hands? Does the Minister agree that quite a number of those elected councillors were murderers and are still murderers in their hearts?

Mr. Clay: Name them.

Rev. William McCrea: I could name several, but one is Davey, the finger man in south Londonderry.

Mr. Scott: If the RUC has evidence that a councillor or anyone else has committed an offence, he will be brought before the courts and charged.

Departmental Co-ordination

10. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to ensure maximum co-ordination on planning and other matters between the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Mr. Needham: Existing co-ordination arrangements are satisfactory and I have no plans to change them.

Mr. Forsythe: Has the Minister had discussions with representatives of the Irish Republic on these matters? Has he obtained their full approval for his answer? Will he explain what arrangements will be made for future discussions on such matters with representatives of the Irish Republic?

Mr. Needham: I should not be giving away any secrets if I said that the major part of the agreement would have nothing to do with the planning procedures between my Department and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Extradition

11. **Mr. McCusker** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many extradition requests involving alleged terrorist activity have been made by the Royal Ulster Constabulary to the Republic of Ireland since 1970; and how many have been granted.

Mr. Scott: The Royal Ulster Constabulary started forwarding warrants to the Garda Siochana involving terrorist-type offences in 1971. Since that time they have forwarded warrants in respect of 96 persons, three of whom were subsequently extradited.

Mr. McCusker: Does not that make a mockery of the diplomatic row created by the Irish Republic when, a few

weeks ago, the Chief Constable of the RUC was reported in America to have said precisely that? Linked with that is the fact that the Irish have honoured only three extradition requests from almost 100, and the fact that there have been hundreds of cross-border incursions from the Republic. Does that not herald the sort of nonsense that will occur once we formalise the complaints procedure for the Irish Republic?

Mr. Scott: The Chief Constable of the RUC answered accurately a direct question, as I have done today. But that does not necessarily give the whole picture. The majority of those cases were rejected by the courts after warrants were produced by the Garda Siochana in the courts. Some of the objects of those warrants were apprehended in other jurisdictions and some, of course, have not been traced by the Garda. I should also say that the authorities in the Republic have co-operated wholeheartedly in the operation of the extra-territorial legislation that was passed by both Parliaments.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend seek to reduce terrorism still further by clearing up a little uncertainty and saying here and now in this Chamber that not only is Northern Ireland part of the United Kingdom, but that he is confident that it will always remain part of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Scott: We have made it absolutely clear that for as long as it is the wish of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland, it will remain part of the United Kingdom.

Security

12. **Mr. Molyneaux** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

16. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation.

18. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation in the Province.

Mr. Tom King: Since my predecessor last answered questions in the House on 11 July, eight civilians and two members of the security forces have died as a result of the security situation in the Province.

The security forces have continued to show great determination in their efforts to defeat terrorism. Since the beginning of this year a total of 435 people have been charged with serious offences, including 23 with murder, and 206 weapons, 11,524 rounds of ammunition and 6,121 lb of explosives have been recovered.

Mr. Molyneaux: In the light of the exchanges, and in the light of what the Secretary of State said, in his heart of hearts does he not agree with his security advisers that any Irish promises of effective co-operation will be meaningless, worthless and incapable of delivery? In effect, the only result from the granting of any kind of consultative role on security matters will be to inhibit and damage the efforts of our own British security forces.

Mr. King: No, I do not accept that. At local level there is certainly good co-operation along the border between the RUC and the Garda Siochana. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman and all hon. Members will look for continuing efforts to improve that co-operation in a common attempt to defeat terrorism, which is just as much an increasing threat south of the border as it is north of the border.

Mr. Proctor: Is not the police reservist who was shot within the last 24 hours in Aughnacloy the first victim and the first tangible result of the Anglo-Irish process? It is a process that can be summed up in a single word—betrayal.

Mr. King: I have to say to my hon. Friend that that is a most disgraceful comment. There is no justification whatever for it. As an hon. Member of this House, he shares a responsibility with other hon. Members not to prejudge situations, but to wait and judge them on the facts. He knows perfectly well that it is the determination of this Government, as I hope it is the determination of every hon. Member, to act more effectively against terrorism, reduce the loss of life and reduce the number of casualties that have been such a tragic stain on the life of the Province.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Secretary of State accept that the signing of any agreement, and the setting up of any secretariat in Northern Ireland which would permit representatives of a foreign Government to be in Northern Ireland, will be seen as the greatest possible insult to the loyal citizens of the Province? Those citizens have historically been supportive of the British Government. Does he recognise, as we see clearly, that such an agreement and such a secretariat will be an immediate encouragement to further murder and bombing, because the gunmen and the bombers will recognise that they have brought this about and will proceed further?

Mr. King: At this stage, I know that the hon. Gentleman will not want to speculate on the contents of any agreement that may be reached. I also know that he will not wish to make any inflammatory comments without full knowledge of the facts.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Does my right hon. Friend recognise that if there is one group of people who wish him well in seeking to reach agreement and turn down the graph of terrorism, it is those men and women in Northern Ireland who suffer most, the members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary? They will not regard it as betrayal if he can achieve an agreement. Will my right hon. Friend nevertheless recognise that while operational arrangements between the Garda and the RUC in general are excellent, they are not helped by public squabbling between the two chief constables?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that tribute. One of the most vivid impressions made on me when I took over my responsibilities was the enormous contribution made and the amazing courage shown by members of the security forces, whether the RUC, the UDR or the British Army units posted there. It is right that this House should recognise the real results that they are achieving in the fight against terrorism.

Mr. Ron Brown: On the question of punishing large-scale criminal activity, what efforts, if any, has the right hon. Gentleman made to ensure that John De Lorean is returned to Northern Ireland to stand trial for his crimes against Irish people?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with security.

Constitutional Reform

13. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to bring forward proposals for a referendum in Northern Ireland on constitutional matters.

Mr. Scott: No, Sir.

Mr. Adley: In the light of what we have heard this afternoon from Northern Ireland Members about the discussions which they have described as constitutional change, should not my colleagues at least consider that, if this is constitutional change, it involves the electors of the whole of the United Kingdom and the electors of Southern Ireland? If there is to be consultation with the electorate, all the electors of both countries should be involved, preferably by being asked the same question.

Mr. Scott: I must repeat what I have said to several other hon. Members. My hon. Friend had better wait and see what is in any agreement. We have no intention of holding any such referendum.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I will be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall attend a dinner given by the Amir of Qatar.

Mr. Ross: I thank the Prime Minister for that reply. Will she take the opportunity to congratulate the Northern Ireland team on reaching the final of the World Cup, as it did last night? Will the right hon. Lady reassure alliance Members that this will in no way deflect her in her negotiations with the Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland, Mr. Garret FitzGerald? We hope that she can conclude those negotiations tomorrow. She certainly will have our support and, I believe, the support of the vast majority of the people of this country.

The Prime Minister I join the hon. Gentleman in congratulating the Northern Ireland team. The win gave great pleasure to both sides of the House. I think the hon. Gentleman will understand that I can say nothing further today on the possible agreement.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Does the Prime Minister's Conservative and Unionist Administration believe what the 1969 Labour Administration believed—that Northern Ireland affairs are entirely a matter of domestic jurisdiction?

The Prime Minister: As I have made clear in the House, should any agreement be reached, it will be against the background that decisions north of the border are a matter for the United Kingdom, and decisions south of the border are a matter for the Republic of Ireland. I hope that that answers the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Does the right hon. Lady understand—if she does not yet understand she soon will—that the penalty for treachery is to fall into public contempt?

The Prime Minister: I think that the right hon. Gentleman will understand that I find his remarks deeply offensive. Any agreement that may be reached will be within the bounds that I have indicated. No agreement that may be reached could be implemented before it came before the House for approval.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Does the Prime Minister recall telling the severely disabled bandsmen of the Royal Green Jackets who were injured in the outrage that killed eight of their comrades that they would never want for anything? Has the right hon. Lady now read of their poverty and sense of betrayal? Has she read that, according to the *Daily Mail*, the mother of ex-corporal David Timms wrote to her last June and was still awaiting a reply last Friday? How does the right hon. Lady react to that bitter criticism?

The Prime Minister: If that is so, I should have hoped that the right hon. Gentleman would contact my office. We shall certainly look into the matter most urgently. I understand that the MOD's obligations with regard to the financial support that it should give have been met. I understand that a number of the bandsmen have already received compensation under the criminal injuries legislation and that the MOD is doing all it can to help the others to secure compensation. I shall look further into the right hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Jessel: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the Cyprus secrets trial 12 of the jury were removed by peremptory challenge following a meeting of all defence counsel, chaired by John Alliott, QC, on the morning of Sunday 14 April, when counsel discussed how best to use the right of peremptory challenge to obtain a jury most likely to acquit? Is it not quite intolerable that this should remain legal, and surely it is time that the law was changed as a matter of urgency?

The Prime Minister: The circumstances that my hon. Friend describes would in the particular instance possibly be a matter not for Her Majesty's Government but for the Bar Council. On the wider matter, Law Officers do not at present have sufficient information on which to make a reasoned judgment as to whether the use of peremptory challenge is being abused, but the Attorney-General is arranging for the new Crown prosecution service, when it is established and in place, to conduct a full survey of the use of that right by the defence.

Q2. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Does the Prime Minister not recognise that in Leeds and, no doubt, in other cities, community associations, tenants' groups and other voluntary bodies are determined and able to tackle inner city problems, but that they are stifled by the virtual drying up of revenue funds under the inner city programme? Why on earth have the Government chosen this time to cut back on the funding available under this programme?

The Prime Minister: Since 1979 the Government have allocated £1,900 million of urban programme grants to inner cities, and that is meant to help with the problems. The hon. Gentleman will realise that not all of those problems can be solved simply by extra money. We are looking very much at the direction in which the money is spent.

Viscount Cranborne: During her busy day, will my right hon. Friend tell the House whether any member of the current American Administration, or any official of the American Government, is already aware of the terms of the Anglo-Irish treaty?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend will understand that I cannot comment further on whether or not any agreement will or will not be signed.

Mr. Kinnock: Twice in the past 20 minutes we have heard talk of treachery. Will the right hon. Lady accept from me and the Labour Benches that such talk is inflammatory, irresponsible and should have no place in this democratic assembly?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Cash: Does my right hon. Friend accept that a vast number of people in this country and in this House support the negotiations that have been taking place in the direction of this agreement, and wish the Government every possible success in the outcome?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I make it clear, as I have done before, that if any agreement is signed it could not be implemented before it had been debated and approved by this House.

Q3. **Mr. Strang** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Strang: Has the Prime Minister given any consideration to the harmful effects of unemployment on the health of our young people? Will she take time today to study the book containing the results of a four-year follow-up study by Edinburgh university of more than 1,000 school leavers, which show a clear link between drug use and unemployment? Instead of planning tax cuts, is it not high time that she and her Ministers used the money to create jobs for our unemployed young people, some of whom are living in areas where youth unemployment is more than 50 per cent.?

The Prime Minister: I shall certainly have a look at the book to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, although not today. He will be very much aware of the strenuous efforts that this Government are making to combat the evil of drugs, not only among young people, but among all people in our society. He will also be aware that the millionth young person enters the youth training scheme between now and Christmas, and that is a very creditable record.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Given the strong belief of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in the family unit, as expressed in two recent speeches, will she pay more than lip-service to those ideals by amending the Sunday trading Bill even at this late hour to ensure reform of the present law so that the traditional British Sunday, which is for rest, recreation, religion and family life, can survive?

Furthermore, will my right hon. Friend ensure that when this important matter is debated in the House there will be a free vote on the issue, according to the wishes of the majority of Back Benchers?

The Prime Minister: I think I am right in saying that the Bill to which my hon. Friend refers may be introduced into another place today. It will, therefore, come to the House after deliberations in another place. I am sure that the deliberations of this House will be followed with the greatest possible interest. I believe that it is right to give people the choice on this Bill. Decisions on voting are never taken until the measure comes before the House.

Q4. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cartwright: Why does the right hon. Lady continue to suggest that her Government have provided more financial help to the hard-pressed inner cities when, in fact, the figures show that inner London is typical in having lost four times as much by way of cuts in rate support grant than it has gained through the urban programme?

The Prime Minister: If all programme and partnership authorities had budgeted to spend within Government targets, as, for example, Birmingham did under Conservative control until this year, they would have received since 1981 nearly £1 billion more in grants. They lost it because they overspent.

Mr. Dormand: Has the Prime Minister had an opportunity to read the *Northern Echo* this week? If the right hon. Lady did read it, she would be much better informed on northern matters than she is now. Has she read that the chairman of the Conservative party admitted to the *Northern Echo's* reporter that it is highly likely that there will be a lost generation in the north? By that he meant that there will be a generation of young people who will never have a job. Does she agree with that?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman reads the autumn statement carefully, he will realise the full measure of what the Government are doing to try to create genuine jobs. He will know that the autumn statement continues the approach that has brought five years of steady growth, low inflation and 670,000 new jobs in the past two years. He will know that the rate of job creation is the fastest since 1973 and that it is forecast by the OECD to be the fastest in Europe in 1986. I hope very much that the north will benefit from that job creation.

Mr. Cormack: As Sunday trading can hardly be described as a party political issue, and as my right hon. Friend quite rightly believes in freedom of choice, why can we not have freedom of choice on this matter?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, decisions on whipping, if one may refer to it in this Chamber, are only made just before the week in which the business arises.

Q5. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 14 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Maclennan: In view of the welcome decision of the Government to renew the right of individual petition to the European Court of Human Rights, and the recommendation of the Ulster Unionists contained in their document, "The Way Forward", that there should be a Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland, will the Prime Minister now initiate the inter-party talks on the incorporation of the European convention, which she suggested at an earlier date to my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) should precede that step?

The Prime Minister: No. We have not had cross-party consultations on this matter. We have considered it a number of times. I do not think it right to incorporate that convention into our law.

Q6. **Mr. Speller** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Speller: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind during her busy day the problems of less successful areas such as the west country, where decisions about road planning have been too long delayed, and where implementation of plans have been delayed even further?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. My hon. Friend has been to see me about this matter. He has complained bitterly about the length of time taken to reach decisions. I share his opinion that planning decisions take far too long, and I shall do what I can to speed up the decision in which he has a particular interest.

Mr. Rooker: Why have the Government withdrawn tax relief from tenant management housing co-operatives and so attacked people trying to manage their own housing environment?

The Prime Minister: Taxes are determined either directly by the law or by concession. The concessions are subject, not to ministerial decision, but to that of the Inland Revenue board itself.

Mr. Molyneaux: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In practically every answer about the Anglo-Irish agreement the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Prime Minister advised us to wait to see the contents of that agreement and to study the statement. Is it not intolerable that the House of Commons should be the last to hear the contents of that agreement, which were widely published 48 hours ago?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you noticed that 175 questions to the Prime Minister were tabled for today, of which six of the first eight and seven of the first 12 were by the alliance? Are you prepared to examine the procedures for balloting?

Mr. Speaker: I have no influence whatsoever in the ballot, which is purely the luck of the draw.

Mr. Ray Powell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. When dealing with procedures the Prime Minister referred to the Sunday Trading Bill being introduced in another place. Only last week at business questions the Leader of the House promised that this matter would be considered and that he would report this week. I am asking——

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me. Business questions follow in a minute, and I shall seek to call the hon. Member to put his question then.

May I tell the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) that a blinding light has just struck me. This is a public ballot.

Mr. Ray Powell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am not prepared to take it. This is not a question for me. Business questions will follow. The hon. Gentleman prefaced his remark by saying that the Leader of the House had made an announcement. I cannot answer for the Leader of the House.

Mr. Harris: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I accept your valid point in response to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) that we are talking about a public ballot. However, could you use your good offices to ensure that the original questions are shuffled better before they come out of the box?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that that might be to the hon. Gentleman's detriment.

Mr. McCusker: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During Question Time I was appealed to on numerous occasions to use whatever influence I had to dampen down the rising tensions in Northern Ireland. You, Mr. Speaker, know better than most how hard I have tried in the last 48 hours to confirm the details of the widely leaked agreement. If I cannot appeal to you to protect me and my constituents in this matter, to whom can I appeal?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot help the hon. Gentleman, because neither I nor any hon. Member has seen the agreement.

Mr. Freud: Further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), Mr. Speaker. You said that you had no dealings in the shuffling of the papers, but I am sure you realise that you picked the 20 private Members' motions today, not one of which was tabled by the alliance.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Member. It was not I. It was the Chairman of Ways and Means.

Business of the House

3.35 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House whether he will state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 18 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Local Government Bill.

TUESDAY 19 NOVEMBER—Remaining stages of the Okehampton Bypass (Confirmation of Orders) Bill.

There will be a debate on a motion on the European Council directive 85/397/EEC on health and animal health problems affecting intra-Community trade in heat-treated milk and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's explanatory memorandum of 26 June 1985.

WEDNESDAY 20 NOVEMBER—There will be a debate on a motion on the televising of the proceedings of the House of Commons.

Motion on the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions (No. 2) Regulations Order.

THURSDAY 21 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Armed Forces Bill followed by Second Reading of the Museum of London Bill.

FRIDAY 22 NOVEMBER—There will be a debate on UNESCO on a motion for the Adjournment of the House. The 5th Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 1984/85, "United Kingdom Membership of UNESCO", House of Commons Paper No. 461, will be relevant.

MONDAY 25 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Agriculture Bill.

[Relevant European documents
Debate on Tuesday 19 November
(Unnumbered) Draft Directive on heat treated milk
Relevant Report on European Legislation Committee
HC 5-xxv (1984-85), para 1]

Mr. Kinnock: In view of the forthcoming Anglo-Irish summit, will the Leader of the House ensure that the results of the discussions are reported to the House for questioning as soon as possible, and will he also give an undertaking that he will ensure that time for a debate is provided in the near future?

The Government's decision to press ahead next Wednesday with powers to withdraw board and lodging allowances from those in need is an outrage. The right hon. Gentleman will recall that the original regulations were found to be illegal by the courts and the social security appeal tribunal and were unacceptable to the Statutory Instruments Committee. Now, without consultation with the Social Security Advisory Committee, the Government are putting forward new regulations which may be constitutionally correct but which are, nevertheless, still morally wrong. Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that the changes will mean vagrancy for many unemployed young people and misery for old and sick people who are dependent upon residential care? I appeal to him even now to prevail upon his right hon. Friends, in the name of plain decency, to examine the regulations again to see what impact they will have on people in need.

Has the Leader of the House seen the results of the Department of the Environment's inquiry into the condition of local authority housing stock in England which was recently published? The report states that nearly 4 million homes in Britain, 84 per cent. of which are public housing stock, are in need of substantial repair and renovation. Will he provide Government time in the near future for a debate on that report?

I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, as I am sure the House is, for so speedily arranging for a debate next week on televising the proceedings of the House. Will he confirm that if there is an affirmative vote, as I sincerely hope there will be, he will proceed to set up a Select Committee so that we can discuss the televising of our proceedings in a few months' time?

May I renew my request for early debates on the third report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and the autumn statement, especially as we now discover that old age pensioners are to lose £120 million next year as a result of uprating changes made by the Government?

Following the Home Secretary's careful retreat from the wild allegations made by his Minister of State against hon. Members who legally help visitors who encounter difficulties at ports of entry, will the Leader of the House ensure that we have an early debate in Government time to discuss that and other related matters?

Mr. Biffen: The Leader of the Opposition has given me a fair catalogue to which to respond—*[Interruption.]* It nearly matched Wilson's 14 points. I shall seek to reply to the points in the order in which they were presented.

If the discussions that are currently taking place between the British Government and that of the Irish Republic give rise to the necessity for a report and a debate, I gladly undertake that that will be arranged as early as possible.

As to the point about the board and lodging allowances debate promised for Wednesday evening, I recognise that that is a highly controversial issue. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman realises that there are two sides to the case. Doubtless they will be fiercely contested.

I take note of the request for a debate in Government time on the Department of the Environment inquiry into housing stock. I cannot indicate the likelihood of an early debate in Government time, but doubtless we can consider it through the usual channels.

As to the debate on Wednesday about the possible television broadcasting of the House of Commons, should the House on Wednesday approve the experiment, that would bring into play the Select Committee, which would have a central role in determining the circumstances and conditions in which the experiment might proceed.

We shall be happy to consider through the usual channels the request for a debate upon the third report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Last week I intimated that we should like to have an early debate upon the autumn statement in the terms requested by the right hon. Member for Birmingham Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), but it is also a matter that properly engages the interest of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service.

I have noted the point made about the Home Secretary and the immigration rules. Again, that could be considered through the usual channels.

Mr. John Spence (Ryedale): Can my right hon. Friend make arrangements soon for a debate on the fifth report of the Select Committee on Agriculture about the imminent

accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Community, which will have considerable potential for the benefit of the British economy?

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate very much the importance of that point. My hon. Friend will know that legislation on the accession will come before the House. It is possible that it could be debated then.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Last week, in reply to a question from my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition about Sunday trading, the Leader of the House stated that if we felt anxiety he would investigate the matter and report to the House through the usual channels. I note that the Prime Minister has given a reply. I do not know whether she is now Leader of the House as well as Prime Minister, but she stated that the Bill will come before another place today.

As there is no mandate from the people for such legislation, does not the Leader of the House consider that he should have allowed this House to discuss the matter before it went to another place because it is important to some of us who represent shopworkers and 2,250,000 people involved in the industry? The House of Commons should have been allowed to debate the matter before it went to a non-elected Chamber. Will the Leader of the House let us know what discussions have taken place and why the legislation has gone to another place first?

Mr. Biffen: I take entirely the hon. Gentleman's point. It is a repetition of the point he made last week. I considered the decision in the light of what he said, but I judged it appropriate that the Bill should be introduced in another place for at least two reasons. There is always a problem of balancing the flow of legislation between the two Houses of Parliament. In taking that into account, I felt it appropriate that the Bill should be introduced in another place. Also, the Department concerned has a heavy programme of legislation in the current Session. Again, that point weighed in my judgment. I have no doubt that this House will be able to make its own judgment without inhibition or any sense of feeling deprived when the legislation comes here.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): To give a little stability to the position relation to the agreement between Britain and Ireland, may I ask my right hon. Friend to say when the document will be published and when a statement will be made in the House? Will we have an early debate on the subject so that worms in the woodwork may be revealed to us?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend asks a conditional question because no such agreement has been concluded. I assure him that, should such an agreement be concluded, it will be put before the House at the earliest practical opportunity and debated shortly thereafter.

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): No doubt there is an explanation for the right hon. Gentleman's coyness about the Anglo-Irish discussions. As a meeting will take place tomorrow, and as an agreement will be signed tomorrow, may we be told when a statement will be made in the House and who will make it?

Mr. Biffen: I was forthcoming to my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and I cannot go beyond that.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): Does the Leader of the House recall that in 1982, when it was decided by the then Government, of whom he was a member, that there should be a consultative body in Northern Ireland for elected representatives, it was found necessary for legislation to be passed in this House? May we be assured that a measure would have to go through this Chamber allowing the Republic of Ireland any consultative role in the affairs of Northern Ireland?

Mr. Biffen: It is impossible to answer that question until the agreement, if there is to be one, is made available.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): If the House decides next Wednesday to establish a Select Committee to look into the televised broadcasting of Parliament, may we be assured that that Select Committee's findings will also be subject to a vote in the House?

Will a Minister soon make a statement in the House about the decision of Liverpool city council this morning that its 31,000 employees will not be paid from next week? What contingency plans do the Government intend to announce in those circumstances?

Mr. Biffen: The answer to the first question is yes. The answer to the second is that I shall draw the point to the attention of the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): In view of the great importance to everyone in Britain of the arms control process, will my right hon. Friend please arrange for a debate in Government time ahead of the Geneva summit so that hon. Members in all parts of the House may express their views?

Mr. Biffen: I take sympathetic note of my hon. Friend's suggestion, which addresses an important topic, but he will understand why I would not wish to go beyond that today.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Does the Leader of the House consider that a one-day debate on the subject of televising the proceedings of the House of Commons will be satisfactory, bearing in mind that many of us who supported televising our proceedings now have definite qualms about it? I should have thought that, as more than 600 hon. Members have views on the subject, an additional day's debate would be necessary.

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that we should have an early debate on the situation in Liverpool, bearing in mind that the basic responsibility for what is happening there is that of the Government, who should be questioned on the matter in debate?

Mr. Biffen: The answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is that I hope we shall be able to deal with the matter in a day's debate, although that will probably require the discipline of short speeches. I say that because of the context in which I replied to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). If the House approves the principle of a television experiment, there will be a subsequent opportunity to debate the matter pending the report of the Select Committee.

The answer to the second part is that there will be a debate on the Liverpool situation on Monday. I shall draw the attention of the Secretary of State for the Environment to the desire for the much wider debate that I think the hon. Gentleman would prefer.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Although the power to make international treaties and agreements is for

[Sir John Biggs-Davison]

the Crown and not for this House, do not my right hon. Friend and Her Majesty's advisers think it right that we should debate the terms upon which there should be an agreement with the Irish Republic before the conclusion of any agreement or treaty?

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point, but he knows that I cannot helpfully speculate upon what agreement may or may not be signed. However, should there be an agreement, the House will have an opportunity to debate it before it is put into effect.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Does the Leader of the House accept that the time is now overdue for this country to review its mental health legislation, especially in respect of the profoundly handicapped? Does he agree that it is time for us to turn our backs on Victorian values, and will he support such measures if they are put before the House?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman has made a pertinent observation about the very important role that legislation can play in dealing with mental health matters. He does so from the vantage point of one who has just come top of the ballot. All hon. Members will follow his efforts and wish him good luck.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): I presume that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House intends to speak in our forthcoming debate on televising the proceedings of the House. Does he envisage elegantly pushing the ball down the middle of the pitch or will he give a clear lead to the House on this matter?

Mr. Biffen: I think that the House is looking not for a lead but for a chance to assert its own views.

Mr. Thomas Torney (Bradford, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that the fifth report of the Select Committee on Agriculture, referred to by the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Spence) had the unanimous support of the Committee? Is he also aware that considerable damage will be done to this country's horticulture industry and also to our very depleted fishing industry when Spain enters the European Community? Is he further aware that Spain's fishing fleet is greater than that of the whole of the European Community put together? We should therefore have an early debate on this matter.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman will find that the accession legislation has a favoured position in the queue of Government legislation. However, I understand why he feels that the findings of the Select Committee are particularly important to the consideration of that question.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Is the Leader of the House aware that some hon. Members believe that there are too many votes in this House when we are asked to express our views upon "take note" motions relating to the European Community, upon which our views can have no effect? I suggest, therefore, that the vote should take place before the debate. By having the debate we should be taking note, and those hon. Members who wanted to stay and take note could do so. If the vote took place at 4 o'clock instead of 10 o'clock at night, it would save the time of many hon. Members.

Mr. Biffen: That is an entertaining diversion for this time of the week, but my hon. Friend ought not to disparage too readily the importance of relatively formal motions. The Chamberlain Government fell on the Adjournment. The procedures that we use for dealing with European Community documents have merit, but this matter could doubtless be considered by the Select Committee on Procedure.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): In view of the reticence of the Leader of the House concerning the so-called Anglo-Irish summit, may I ask him whether he is prepared to ask one of his right hon. Friends, in the event of a statement being issued about agreement having been reached, to come to the House and tell right hon. and hon. Members about the grounds upon which they base their confidence that the Government of the Irish Republic will honour that agreement, in view of its history as a free state and as the Irish Republic in failing to honour similar agreements? Can the right hon. Gentleman say wherein the difference will now lie in that we are told Northern Ireland is to be recognised as part of the United Kingdom de facto? We understand that for years Northern Ireland has been recognised de facto as part of the United Kingdom but that the Government of the Republic of Ireland have resolutely refused to recognise Northern Ireland de jure and under their constitution they cannot.

Mr. Biffen: If an agreement should be concluded, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that it will be reported to the House by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the earliest practical opportunity and that a general debate will follow shortly thereafter.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Does my right hon. Friend share my surprise and concern that the Government have not yet come to the House to make a statement on the very serious crisis in the tin industry—not only as it affects the City of London and the London metal exchange but as it affects the producers of tin in Cornwall? Would he be so kind as to have a word with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry about making a statement on this important matter early next week?

Mr. Biffen: Yes, I shall most certainly have a word with my right hon. Friend about that matter, which, as my hon. Friend rightly observed, is important for both Cornwall and the wider world. Meanwhile, he might think of trying his chance in an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Was it not unusual that, for the debate on the Gracious Speech, the usual channels made no arrangement to debate the National Health Service, especially as we have a new Minister for Health and as there have been a number of other developments? Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a full day's debate in Government time as soon as possible so that some of the recent changes and other important aspects of the NHS may be discussed?

Mr. Biffen: It is not for me to question the wisdom of the usual channels. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has been in this place long enough to realise that the choice of topics does not always lie with this side of the House. However, I take note of his request. I cannot hold out any immediate hope, but I realise that it is a most important topic.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): As everyone in this House—apart, apparently, from those on the Treasury

Bench — understands that, short of Armageddon, an arrangement will be signed tomorrow between Dublin and London, will my right hon. Friend ensure that a statement is made in this House on Monday or Tuesday?

Does my right hon. Friend accept that many English Unionists think that a debate on Wednesday on this important matter is of infinitely more importance than a debate on whether we should televise the House?

Mr. Biffen: Once again, I cannot anticipate whether there will be an agreement. However, I assure my hon. Friend that a question of such importance to the House, and a debate thereafter, will be considered with the utmost expedition.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that an amendment would be in order next Wednesday, when we debate the damaging and ridiculous proposition that cameras should be brought into the House, to the effect that cameras should be allowed into Standing and Select Committees, which would provide the public in Britain with a much better view and opinion of the proceedings of Parliament?

Mr. Biffen: Such a decision lies with the Chair, not with me.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Since the European Court of Human Rights has an effective veto over the statutes and Acts passed by these Houses of Parliament, why cannot we have a debate on whether we should extend the right of individual petition before that decision is finally made and the signatures ratified?

Will my right hon. Friend exercise some of those qualities of leadership with which he is most abundantly endowed by telling the House how he will vote on Wednesday?

Mr. Biffen: I do not think that how the House votes on Wednesday will bear any relationship to my personal gesture. All that I can say is that I feel less enthusiastic about the topic, one way or the other, than a great many of my hon. Friends.

On my hon. Friend's first point, I take account of the importance of the topic. We have had exchanges on this matter in the past, and I cannot go beyond what I have hitherto said.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): On 5 December, the Secretary of State for Education and Science announced from the Dispatch Box his intention to publish a Green Paper on student support systems. On Tuesday, in answer to a planted written question, he said: "no useful purpose would be served by the publication of such a paper."—[*Official Report*, 12 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. *113*.]

Will the Leader of the House ensure that, in future, if a statement is made from the Dispatch Box, any statement rescinding that statement should also be made from the Dispatch Box so that Back Benchers may have an opportunity to question the wisdom of such a decision? If that is not done, the Chancellor of the Exchequer will come to the Dispatch Box and announce a cut in taxes, and then rescind it in answer to a planted written question—which I am sure is the very last thing that we want.

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that that is the last thing that the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) believes would happen. Nevertheless, I accept the hon. Gentleman's point and will be in touch with him after I have considered it.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): With reference to the important debate on Wednesday about televising the proceedings of the House, and bearing in mind the reply of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), will he assure me that there will be an absolutely free vote with no hidden strings attached?

Mr. Biffen: I understand these arcane issues are for the Patronage Secretary, who will have heard what my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) has requested.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): The Leader of the House will be aware of the recent announcement by the Secretary of State for Energy of a new independent colliery review procedure under which all proposed closures of coal mines will be examined impartially by a judicially appointed organisation consisting of a number of eminent silks and judges. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that nobody knows how this procedure will work, least of all the Secretary of State for Energy, the National Coal Board or the National Union of Mineworkers?

Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for an early debate on this important subject? Three pits are due to be closed before the end of 1985 and until the procedure has been completed no final decision can be made. This is infinitely more important than a parochial and ridiculous debate about televising Parliament.

Mr. Biffen: I take note of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, but I must tell him that I can hold out no hope of a debate in Government time on that matter. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy to his remarks.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Is my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House aware that the Leicestershire National Union of Teachers has today launched a day of inaction in my constituency on the ground that, as the secretary of the Back-Bench education committee, I should be punished along with my constituents, especially parents and children? Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is a callous way to act? Should not the teachers be back at work? After all, that is what they are paid for. Why should they be paid for being on strike today?

Mr. Biffen: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. I believe that the tactic of industrial action is especially reprehensible. No doubt my hon. Friend will wish to take advantage of education questions on Tuesday to reinforce his argument.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I declare my full support for the teachers' action. They are merely seeking to secure decent pay and conditions for themselves.

Is the Leader of the House aware of the circumstances surrounding a constituent of mine called Kevin Capenhurst, aged 17 years, who was detained in a borstal while terminally ill with cancer? He was released only after a vigorous campaign but has now died.

Will the Leader of the House allow a debate on the scandal of the detention unnecessarily and without campassion of those who are terminally ill in prisons and the equivalent of borstals, and about the proper notification of such cases to the Government, which does not now take place?

Mr. Biffen: I shall refer the remarks of the hon. and learned Member to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. It occurs to me that this is precisely the sort of topic that might feature in an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Bearing in mind the disaster at Manchester airport and the incident involving the British Airways aircraft at Copenhagen on Tuesday, will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Transport to make an early statement on aircraft safety, with particular reference to maintenance procedures? If the aircraft on Tuesday had taken off and the undercarriage had not collapsed during taxi-ing on the runway—which was a sheer fluke and very fortunate for those involved — there would probably have been another disaster at Manchester, its point of destination.

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says. As I come from the north-west, I realise that these accidents leave harrowing memories. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to this matter.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the Leader of the House give further thought to Wednesday's debate on board-and-lodging payments which are extremely contentious? It is not satisfactory to have only a one-and-a-half-hour debate on this subject after 10.15 pm, or possibly later. Many hon. Members are anxious about the nature of the order and the complicated procedures attached to it.

Would it not be better for the Leader of the House to ensure that we have longer for that debate? If he cannot guarantee more time on Wednesday, will he consider an early opportunity for the House to discuss the complicated procedures that are involved in this type of order, especially as they seem to affect policy issues rather than administration?

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's second point, which he makes with his authority as Chairman of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. He is right to say that it is a contentious order, but its merits are familiar to the House. I hope that the matter will be resolved on Wednesday.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I refer my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to early-day motion 76:

[That this House notes that the Miss World contestants were invited to use the dining room and terrace of the House; regrets that the facilities of the House were used to promote a particular company, namely Mecca; and particularly regrets that the House should have been used to promote the Miss World contest which reinforces the idea that what matters most about a woman is what she looks like and whether she is sexually attractive to men.]

Will he arrange a debate on it? Would it be possible for, you, Mr. Speaker to allow the six lady sponsors to be apparelled as they think fit, when perhaps the House could choose a "Ms. House of Commons" from among them?

Mr. Biffen: As I do not have the faintest idea what early-day motion 76 refers to, I shall give it my active consideration.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I should like to reinforce the plea of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition for a debate on the report published on Tuesday afternoon by the Department of the Environment on the quality of the housing stock. There was no debate in Government time on housing matters in general in the previous Session and in March the former Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who is now the Minister of State, Treasury, said it would be unbelievable if it were found that the cost of repairs and renovations required to the housing stock would be £19 billion. The report puts the figure at £18·8 billion, and, as the report was published by the Government, that reinforces the case for an early debate in Government time.

Mr. Biffen: I understand the hon. Gentleman's argument, but he must appreciate that it would be inappropriate for me to argue its merits. Clearly I cannot go beyond what I said to the Leader of the Opposition, but I recognise that this is a matter of great general interest.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will the Leader of the House arrange an early debate on the economic and political consequences of the new telephones installed in the Palace of Westminster and its environs? There is an economic consequence, because at vast public expense to the taxpayer, when we are supposed to be holding down public spending, we have replaced telephones which the less intelligent of us like myself could understand with machines which we cannot.

For those in favour of the political consequences, against leaks and in favour of open government, I would warn them that if one puts one hand over the mouthpiece in order to tell one's secretary that there is an idiot git on the other end, the idiot git can hear one saying it.

Mr. Biffen: That might be one of the less damaging things one would say to one's secretary. I shall bear in mind my hon. and learned Friend's request, but in the domestic arrangements of the Palace of Westminster, I fear that research assistants still have a head lead over any other topic.

Mr. Speaker: This is an appropriate moment to say first that I shall call those hon. Members who have been rising in their places, but I ask them to be brief.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House do his best to ensure that discussions through the usual channels on the request made for a debate on the serious allegations made by the Minister of State, Home Office are conducted urgently?

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the Minister of State has apparently written to more than 20 Members of all parties asking for correspondence to be published and that it would be much better to have a debate to allow the Minister of State to substantiate or withdraw his serious allegations? Members could then justify the important right that they have to intervene in immigration matters.

Mr. Biffen: I note what the hon. Gentleman says, but I cannot go beyond what I said to the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House consider extending the time for the debate on televising the House if he will not provide time for a two-day debate?

Mr. Biffen: I shall consider the matter, but I hope that the House will reflect on the virtues of short speeches and tolerably early nights.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for an early debate on information technology — a sunrise industry in which we led the

world in 1979, but now have a huge deficit in balance of payments—so that we can find out the reason for the decline and discover what steps are needed to remedy it?

Mr. Biffen: I shall bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's request, but we have just concluded the debate on the Queen's Speech, one day of which was devoted to trade, industry and employment, so I cannot in all fairness suggest that a debate in Government time soon is likely.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): I apologise to my right hon. Friend for returning to a subject to which he has already been asked to address himself several times. Are we to infer from his replies to questions about tomorrow's Anglo-Irish agreement that he can find some circumstances that would make that agreement seem so unimportant that it would not be worth rearranging next week's business? If he can, why has there been so much fuss about this already?

Mr. Biffen: I cannot helpfully answer my hon. Friend's last point, but should an agreement be concluded the arrangements for its being reported to the House and debated subsequently would be conducted with expedition.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I again press the Leader of the House to recognise the deep strength of feeling about the need for an early debate on the Department of the Environment's report on the appalling state of the British housing stock, particularly in the light of the fact that, even after the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement, we shall be spending less this year on house building and improvement then we did last year, and next year we shall be spending even less. Is there not a desperate need for a debate on this matter, and will the Leader of the House please take that message back to his colleagues?

Mr. Biffen: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will realise that the fact that I do not seek to combat his exposition of the situation does not mean that I am indifferent to the importance of the topic, but I canot go beyond the answer that I have given to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House consider a debate about the Silentnight dispute that has been going on for nearly six months in both Lancashire and Yorkshire? Several hundred workers have been out on strike principally because they joined a trade union in accordance with their rights but were unable to act like a trade union because of the Tory employer who was more concerned with filling his pockets and those of his family with £700,000 in shares than with paying one third of that the amount asked for in the wage claim. Is it not time that we had a debate on this matter? My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) initiated an Adjournment debate on the subject the other night in which about 20 hon. Members wished to take part. They wanted to discuss the aspects talked about on the Tory Benches so often but never practised—the freedoms of a living wage, to be able to negotiate when in a trade union and to conciliate with a Tory employer who refuses to act decently and give the workers the chance to negotiate.

Mr. Biffen: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman has made a characteristic and controversial premise, but I leave that to one side. I shall draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I support the point made by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) about the need for a debate on the disgraceful letter sent by the Minister of State, Home Office to a number of hon. Members. That letter has caused a great deal of concern among the families of people who are suffering because of the immigration laws. Does not the Leader of the House realise that it would be far more important and beneficial if the Minister devoted his energy to investigating the many humiliations that people face when they arrive at our airports, the excessive delays of immigration officials in dealing with immigration matters and the fear and concern that many people legally in this country suffer because of the way in which the immigration laws operate?

Mr. Biffen: I cannot accept the highly prejudicial opinion of the letter that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office sent. However, I note the hon. Gentleman's desire for a debate.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The Leader of the House may not be aware that the results of an independent inquiry under the chairmanship of John Platts-Mills, QC into the visit of the former Home Secretary to Manchester university in March has recently been published. Given that that inquiry concluded that the police in Manchester were guilty of unacceptable use of force and subsequently were guilty of assault and burglary, are not these conclusions of such tremendous importance to the people of Manchester that the least that we could expect is a full debate in Parliament or that the matter should be passed over to those responsible so that a proper and adequate independent inquiry may be conducted by a committee at national level?

Mr. Biffen: I am not clear about the status of the Platts-Mills inquiry, but I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Next Thursday we shall have Second Reading debates on the Armed Forces Bill and the Museum of London Bill, two important Bills. As it appears that the Museum of London Bill is hybrid and as there is great concern and interest in the Bill at County hall, will the 10 o'clock rule be suspended?

Mr. Biffen: We shall see how business goes, but I understand the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It may have escaped your notice that the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) referred to a "planted question". Is it in order for a question to be referred to in this way, and may we know how to recognise one when we see one?

Mr. Speaker: I heard the hon. Member use that phrase. It is frequently mentioned in the Chamber; but I do not understand what it means either.

Arts Council

4.16 pm

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Luce): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement.

I have decided to announce the Arts Council's grant-in-aid for 1986-87 now to meet the need for the earliest possible sign of provision for the arts after abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils. Subject to parliamentary approval, the grant for the Arts Council next year will be £135·6 million. I understand that this will enable the Arts Council, in accordance with its normal practice, to enter into commitments worth nearly £137 million for the financial year. The grant of £135·6 million is a substantial increase above both the current year's—1985-86—grant of £105 million and the provisional planning figure of £122 million originally set for next year.

Last year, my predecessor announced £16 million in additional central funding for the performing arts, and £1 million for film, in the abolition areas. Since then, a strong case has been made for more funding. The Government have decided to respond. I am therefore raising the £16 million to £25 million for the Arts Council, and the £1 million to £1·3 million for the British Film Institute. With the £17 million already announced for museums, this brings the total of additional central funding for the arts in the abolition areas next year to over £43 million.

The remaining basic provision of £110·6 million for the Arts Council — a further increase on the originally planned £106 million for next year—is intended to meet other special needs which have been put to me by the Arts Council, especially to continue its strategy of regional arts development. It also includes £0·6 million of continued special support for the Scottish national companies, made necessary following changed responsibilities in local government in Scotland.

These additional sums are a demonstration of my determination to keep up the Government's support and, in particular, to give arts bodies in the GLC and metropolitan areas a good foundation on which to build. In that context, I invite the districts and boroughs in those areas to give early and constructive thought to the contribution they can make to this joint venture. They have an important role to play.

So have private companies. I hope that business sponsorship of the arts will continue to grow in the abolition areas as in the country as a whole. I shall be looking to see what further action I can take to encourage this through the business sponsorship incentive scheme next year.

Some uncertainty is inevitable at the beginning of a period of transition. For this reason, I propose to give maximum help to the Arts Council in the first year. As time goes on, local authorities which have been relieved of GLC and MCC precepts should be able to increase their share. The central Government's contribution of £25 million for the Arts Council will accordingly be tapered down. It will be about £21 million in 1987-88, and about £20 million in 1988-89.

All other grants within my arts programme will be announced in a more detailed statement in December. I have not yet taken decisions on the allocations for individual arts bodies, but in overall terms the amounts available will be broadly at the levels which were allowed for in the last public expenditure White Paper, and subsequently communicated for planning purposes to the bodies concerned.

Today's announcement will now enable the arts to plan ahead with confidence.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): First, I take this opportunity to welcome the new Minister to the Dispatch Box for the first time. Secondly, I thank him for making a statement on arts funding, for the first time. Thirdly, I thank him for fulfilling a pledge, which may be unusual for the Conservative party, which he gave a month ago, when he said:

> "I must make it absolutely clear that there is no prospect of my being able to fund the sort of growth which many in the arts are seeking."

Today's statement certainly fulfils that pledge. The figures show that we are facing, not an increase, but a massive shortfall in the total provision for the arts. The baseline figure of £105 million increases to £110·6 million. Therefore, basic arts funding has increased by £5 million, which is designed to meet the problems of regional arts developments. The bare inflationary increase has already reduced that figure by almost half, we are already facing a minus quantity.

That does not take into consideration the massive shortfall in arts funding following the abolition, out of political pique, of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils. The Minister seeks to cover that by the sum of £25 million, but that leaves a massive shortfall of £19 million to meet the needs of the arts occasioned by the aboliton of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils.

The Minister must inherit the pledges of his predecessors, because he is a member of the same Government. In a letter to me on 2 August, his predecessor said:

> "I reject any insinuation that the Government will not stand by its assurances that the present level of public support for the arts will be maintained."

It is no longer an insinuation; it is a charge. Funding for the arts has decreased by the vast sum of £19 million to £20 million for the reason that I mentioned alone, and the minimum £5 million anti-inflation grant is already halved by the need of the Arts Council to finance its regional development.

We shall seek an early debate on the matter. I must ask the Minister not to attempt to do what his predecessor tried to do, and hoodwink the arts bodies into thinking that their funds are being restored. Many companies will die as a result of the amount announced today. We are already seeing the fruits of the Government's policy at Covent Garden. It is not only the national institutes that will be harmed, but the various community art groups, which have been playing a major role in developing our communities socially and culturally during the past three years. If the Government would pay more attention to that, instead of to the hard line advocated by the chairman of the Conservative party, we might prosper. I hope that the Minister will retract his statement and restore the massive shortfall that he has now broght about in arts funding.

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his first remarks, but not so grateful for his second ones. When he used the term "massive shortfall" he was extremely misleading. Not only I, but my predecessor and others, have repeatedly made it clear that this is a joint venture. Both central Government and local authorities

must play their part in financing the arts. We have made a positive gesture, which calls for a response from successor authorities to play their part. My predecessor gave a clear commitment to provide £34 million to cover any shortfall caused by abolition, and I have increased that to £43 million. We are entitled to say to the successor authorities that they are relieved of the rate precept, that they know what the real local needs in the arts are, and to ask them to play a small part in proportion to their total budget in helping to finance the arts through a joint partnership.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I congratulate my hon. Friend on having obtained substantially more for the Arts Council than some pessimists predicted, but may I ask him forcefully to remind the Treasury—the Minister of State is sitting next to him—that the Arts Council sum still amounts to only one part in one thousand of the national budget, and that more is needed, not only to enrich the lives of the people, but to generate tourism and jobs?

Mr. Luce: I know of my hon. Friend's deep concern for the arts and for his active interest in them. The amount of money that has gone to the Arts Council during the past six years has increased by 7 per cent. in real terms. That is an important recognition of its role, which is constructive. However, we must look to a variety of sectors for arts funding — not only to central Government, but to local authorities and the private sector.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I also congratulate the Minister on his new appointment, but am disappointed that more money is not on the table. Will he tell the House, first, how secure is the new money that he has found; secondly, what the financial implications are for the South Bank; and, thirdly, what the implications are for the "Glory of the Garden" and how he expects that policy to continue?

Mr. Luce: First, the money that I have announced is secure. Secondly, although it is for the Arts Council to determine how much it earmarks for the South Bank, I have every reason to believe, against the background of the announcement, that the South Bank has a good future. Thirdly, regarding the "Glory of the Garden", the regional development plans of the Arts Council, I said in my statement that we are making extra sums available to the Arts Council for that specific purpose, because it is important not to ignore the importance of the regions in their contributions to the arts.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): I congratulate my hon. Friend on making a positive statement. I wish to follow up two of the questions of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North East (Mr. Freud). Can my hon. Friend guarantee that his increased grant to the Arts Council is sufficient to carry both the capital and the current expenditure of about £8·5 million that is required to secure the future of the South Bank? By my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Gentleman, is he suggesting that part of the grant will be earmarked to ensure that progress is made in pursuing the policy of the "Glory of the Garden", which most right hon. and hon. Members feel is essential if we are to broaden the popular base of public support for the arts?

Mr. Luce: I entirely agree with the views expressed by my hon. Friend on the "Glory of the Garden". It has an important role to play. The first evidence of the use of the money by the Arts Council is that much of it goes on matching grants. It therefore has a multiplier effect and makes a positive contribution. I have every confidence that the sums being made available to the Arts Council will enable it to ensure that what happens on the South Bank will be something of which we can be proud.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I welcome the statement. It is a welcome change from past practices. I hope that we shall have an early debate on the arts. Indeed, it would be a good subject for a televised debate.

The £25 million which the Minister has allocated to the arts, following the abolition of the GLC and metropolitan county councils, is insufficient, because the GLC alone spends more than £21 million on the arts. Clearly, that does not leave much for the rest of the country. It appears that the Arts Council will have to devote one third of the total amount to sustain activities on the South Bank, and it clearly cannot do that. Will the Minister think seriously about making additional funds available for the South Bank? If he does not, the open foyer policy at the Royal Festival Hall will undoubtedly have to end, and there will be dark nights in all the theatres and concert halls. Finally, will the Minister resist any moves by the Arts Council to make up the shortfall by selling land on the South Bank for offices and hotel development?

Mr. Luce: It is up to the Arts Council to decide how much it allocates to the South Bank, but I have every confidence in its future. The overall figure of £25 million is a positive contribution, and we are entitled to expect the successor authorities to play their part. The authorities are already relieved of the rate precept, and we are suggesting that only small sums of money relative to the total sum of money which they spend—£7 billion—be contributed to the arts.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will my hon. Friend accept my thanks for making the statement today? Will he also accept that it does not go far enough? What he has provided are, at best, first-aid resources when we have a long-term problem. Will he reflect on what my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) said about tourism? Millions of people come to this country every year, attracted not by the weather or our cuisine but by what we have to offer, and the arts are one of our greatest magnets. Will he also take down from the shelves the unanimous 1983 report of the Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts, which is gathering dust? It contains recommendations which, if the Government implemented them, would solve almost all the problems of the arts.

Mr. Luce: On my hon. Friend's last point, I am studying the report carefully. I acknowledge the validity of his first point. The arts play a major role in attracting tourists. The major exhibition in Washington of British country house treasures is another example of the way in which we can attract more tourists to this country.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I am grateful for this early announcement, which will allow many organisations to plan ahead. Does the Minister accept that it will be difficult for some local authorities to earmark funds, bearing in mind the pressures to which they will be subjected? What discussions has he had with the

[Mr. Robert Sheldon]

authorities to ensure that those funds will be made available? Will he hold himself open for further financing if necessary?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful for what the right hon. Gentleman said. This statement will give all the arts bodies and successor authorities time to plan. I acknowledge that every week that goes by is important to them, and I hope that this statement will give them some basis upon which to plan. It is for the Arts Council to take the lead in deciding what the successor authorities can do. I shall play my part. Indeed, only this week I have been talking to successor authorities in the Newcastle area to see what they can do.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend on this early statement, which shows the Government's understanding of some of the budgeting difficulties of arts and heritage bodies. May I seek reassurance that sufficient moneys will be available for the Government's funding of the business sponsorship scheme, which has been so hugely successful, especially as the Government's contributions have been on a better ratio than hitherto?

Will my hon. Friend give an assurance that galleries and arts bodies will not lose grant because of the moneys that they manage to attract through their own efforts? How have discussions progressed with the Treasury and other Departments on the way in which tax incentives could be given, to the benefit of our heritage? We promised this at the last election and action should be taken before the next election.

Mr. Luce: On the last point, the Government have introduced several tax incentives designed to encourage greater contributions to the arts. I welcome my hon. Friend's remarks about the business sponsorship scheme. In its first year of operation, it raised an extra £4 million from business, and an injection of £1·5 million from the taxpayer. It has a good multiplier effect for the arts, and I have great confidence that the scheme will make a contribution in the abolition areas.

I acknowledge my hon. Friend's point that galleries and museums should be encouraged to raise extra revenue in addition to the basic funding that we will continue to give them. I shall do my best to ensure that everything is done to encourage, not to discourage, them.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Does the Minister agree that the sums that he has announced today fall far short of the Arts Council's estimates of the sums required to fulfil its responsibilities? The budget of £110 million is about £16 million short of the Arts Council's estimate. The metropolitan enhancement money, although welcome, is still about £10 million short of the Arts Council's estimate of what would be necessary to fill that gap.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council has estimated that roughly £35 million is required in the abolition areas. The Government have provided £25 million, and it is not unreasonable to look to the successor authorities to make up the difference. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will help in that connection.

Sir Paul Bryan (Boothferry): My hon. Friend has answered questions about the South Bank. May we now turn to the provinces? What will be the effect of his statement on the Royal Exchange theatre in Manchester? Last year, the theatre drew £610,000 from the Arts Council and £548,000 from the Greater Manchester council. That £548,000 will no longer be available. Will the Arts Council allowance be topped up to that extent?

Mr. Luce: This sum applies to all abolition areas, and it will be for the Arts Council to determine how much of this extra money it will allocate to those areas, which includes Manchester. That is the best way to proceed. The Arts Council must determine how best to use this money, and the successor authorities must make their contributions.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I am sure that the new Minister has learnt that the arts are flourishing on Merseyside. Can he assure me that the arts in their various forms on Merseyside will be able to continue at their present level? In view of the point that he made about contributions from industry does he consider that the arts in Liverpool will develop further when industry there has been declining for the past six years? Can he assure me that the arts will be able to develop in the way that they wish?

Mr. Luce: I say to the hon. Gentleman that I have received a delegation from Merseyside, all of whose members were deeply concerned about the arts. I acknowledge the important contribution to the arts that is made by the galleries and theatres on Merseyside. It is my job to make known the total sum that I can make available to the Arts Council, and it is for the council to determine how much it can allocate to each area. However, I have every confidence that the successor authorities will provide adequate funding for the arts.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I congratuate my hon. Friend on taking the vast intellectual leap from being a Minister at the Foreign Office, like my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), to being Minister for the Arts. I thank him for the extra £600,000 which the Scottish arts are to receive, but I remind him that that is the total budget of the Royal Exchange theate in Manchester. In Scotland we provide far better facilities, far better theatres, and better art galleries, without throwing money at them. Will my hon. Friend learn the lesson that is art created, not by money, but by our attitude towards it?

Mr. Luce: I am not sure how to read the first part of my hon. and learned Friend's question, and I shall not go any further on that. He asked about our attitude to the arts. I have no shadow of doubt that the arts go beyond day-to-day politics. They are a fundamental part of our way of life, heritage and culture. There are a variety of ways in which we can all contribute to the health and wealth of our arts. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland for contributing £600,000 to our budget for Scotland. That is simply to deal with one problem, the transfer of arts responsibilities from regional to second-tier authorities.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): Leaving aside the special additional provision for the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan authorities, is not the basic provision increase only £5 million—from £105 million to £110 million? That will be inadequate to meet all the

demands on the Arts Council, which demands include regional development, as pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher).

I welcome the £600,000 for Scotland. Will the Minister confirm what his statement suggests, that this is earmarked for Scottish national companies? Will he take on board the fact that, in view of the demands on the Scottish Arts Council over the last few years, the previous special enhancement of £300,000 that went to Scottish Opera in 1984 has been largely dissipated by reductions in grants? This was due to the inadequacy of funding for the Scottish Arts Council. What guarantee is there that that will not happen again?

Mr. Luce: It is now a matter for the Arts Council in Scotland to determine how the money will be allocated. In the first part of his question, the hon. Gentleman asked about the extra non-abolition £5 million for the Arts Council. This is in line with, and possibly a little more than, the expected rate of inflation. It is a constructive contribution to solving some of the regional problems that the Arts Council wishes to deal with and gives the council an opportunity to cater for the "Glory of the Garden" strategy.

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn, Hatfield): Will my hon. Friend confirm that the increase in funding for the Arts Council since this Government came to power will now be increased by some 7 per cent. in real terms? That is a matter for congratulation. Stimulation from business sponsorship has been enhanced by Government action, and that, too, is a matter for congratulation. It is a pity that Opposition Members do not recognise those facts.

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. In the last six years we have more than doubled the amount of money available for the arts. In real terms the increase is over 7 per cent. The 7 per cent. is for the Arts Council, but it is over 7 per cent. in real terms for our total arts allocation. I have already mentioned business sponsorship, and this new scheme is making a positive contribution.

Mr. Alec Woodall (Hemsworth): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his appointment, and even more so on the personal commitment to the arts in his statement. Is he aware of the serious concern in the regions? For example, is he aware that on 28 June this year his hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) said that the West Yorkshire metropolitan county council revenue expenditure for the Yorkshire arts association for 1983-84 was £216,000? In fact, the amount given by the West Yorkshire metropolitan county council for that year exceeded £320,000. Opera North was given £200,000, and Leeds Playhouse received £60,000, and those amounts alone exceeded the amount announced by his hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West.

People in the regions are worried that the contribution will not be sufficient, even with the extra amount announced now by way of the local government contribution. Will the Minister stress to his right hon. Friend that when he makes his announcement later this year about the rate support grant there should be a special increased arts element in the rate support grant for 1986-87?

An excellent document was produced by the Yorkshire arts association, and I can give the hon. Gentleman a copy. The document lists 90 special events to which the Yorkshire arts association is committed and wants to carry out. Following the Minister's statement, I am afraid that unless the association gets some extra money in December, this booklet will have to go by the board. Will the Minister please press for extra money in the rate support grant?

Mr. Luce: I take on board the point made by the hon. Gentleman. He referred to the Yorkshire arts association. As well as the Arts Council, all the arts associations play a constructive role in the arts, and we are lucky to have them. The allocation of money is a matter for the Arts Council and successor authorities.

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): I congratulate my hon. Friend on his statement that the Government's policy will be to retain the commitment to support the arts in constituencies such as mine in the west midlands which will be affected by the abolition of the metropolitan councils. The figure of £43 million will be appreciated by those in my constituency. Conservative Members have been pleading for a long time for a more positive response to private sponsorship of the arts. That is the way forward.

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the points that he has made. I hope that all hon. Members will draw to the attention of businesses and arts bodies the benefits of the business sponsorship scheme, because it brings enormous benefits and has a multiplying effect. It is one of the ways in which we can contribute to the growth of the arts.

Mr. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): In his previous post the Minister must have understood very well the enormous advantage and prestige gained by British opera and theatre companies and orchestras travelling abroad. In view of the difficult position that the arts have been in for some years, I am certain that his statement will not help them. In the west midlands the arts are in great difficulty, and practically all over the country we have seen local theatres closing down. Those which are able to maintain themselves have had to reduce the size of their productions and the number of people they employ. Will the Minister give an undertaking that he will look at the matter again and make an additional statement in December and provide resources in the light of experience?

Mr. Luce: I have had a chance to talk to the chairman and director of the Midlands arts association. They expressed to me their views about the arts in their area. I have made quite clear what the Government can do on behalf of the taxpayers. I hope the hon. Lady will do everything that she can to persuade successor authorities to join this partnership.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Accepting that detailed distribution of funds is a matter for the Arts Council, will my hon. Friend invite the council to restore some of the grants that were withdrawn last year? I have in mind particularly the superb Churchill theatre in Bromley, which puts on excellent productions and which, despite having obtained increased local authority support and increased sponsorship, is finding it difficult to make good the shortfall.

Mr. Luce: I note what my hon. Friend has said, and I am sure that the chairman of the Arts Council will note

[Mr. Luce]

it as well. I must stress again that I have allocated a sum to the Arts Council, and it is for the Arts Council to determine the allocation of that sum.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Can the Minister clarify a point about the £600,000 for Scotland, because there seems to be some confusion about what he said. Has that money been earmarked for support of the Scottish national institutions, or is it for the Arts Council in Scotland to determine how to dispose of it? Clearly, the transfer of responsibilities to the second tier of local authorities has made the support for community arts difficult.

On the broader question of taxation, the Minister's answer was far too complacent, bearing in mind the enormous additional burden which his Government imposed upon the arts by increases in value added tax. Will the Minister not set his face against more inducements to further contributions made to the arts, through further taxation reliefs?

Mr. Luce: If I may clarify that point about national institutions, it is true that the main purpose of this sum is that it should go to the national institutions in Scotland. I am sorry if the hon. Gentleman got the impression that I was complacent. I am not at all complacent. I want to do everything that I can to encourage the private individual as well as businesses to contribute to the arts. The Government's tax changes have made a contribution. We must do all that we can to encourage contributions to the arts.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): I think that my hon. Friend knows of my interest in live theatre. May I put in a word for the live artist? Will my hon. Friend consider private sponsorship of the arts? It is one thing for a great industry, business or commercial organisation to show its patronage of the arts by staging an art exhibition for an artist or artists, or by backing an orchestra, opera or ballet, but what we really want is for the private sponsor or patron of the arts to buy works of art. A successful business can afford to do so. Will my hon. Friend encourage private sponsors to think like that? The attitude of businesses is important also.

Mr. Luce: I know of my hon. Friend's interest in the theatre and live arts. About 10 days ago I opened a seminar which was designed specifically to encourage businesses to take a direct interest in the arts by purchasing paintings and making other contributions.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that, despite the increased allocations announced this afternoon, many non-metropolitan districts are afraid, because of the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties and pressure on the Arts Council, that their projects will not receive the support that is justified? Will it be possible for projects such as the Burnley Mechanics theatre, which will open next year at a capital cost of more than £2 million, to receive support? Will the hon. Gentleman have a word with the Secretary of State for the Environment to ensure that councils which are completing such projects will not be subject to penalty? Burnley knows that it will incur a 3p rate, and because of changes in GREA and RSG it is likely to be heavily penalised.

Mr. Luce: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is equally anxious that the successor authorities should play their part. I note the hon. Gentleman's point. I think that my statement should provide a firm foundation upon which successor authorities can plan. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will play his part in persuading them to do so.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I thank my hon. Friend for his statement and, more especially, for securing an increase. It was thought that there would be a decrease in the funds available, but this increase will be widely welcomed. Will the increase in the Arts Council budget for 1985-86 be an increase in real terms? Will my hon. Friend ensure that sufficient funds are available to give the widest possible publicity to the business sponsorship scheme? To encourage people to purchase works of art, will my hon. Friend set an example in his Department and hang works of art by living artists on the walls of his offices?

Mr. Luce: I am doing just that. I have my own scheme to publicise the works of living artists. The increased allocation to the Arts Council on the non-abolition side is £5 million, which is slightly more than the expected inflation rate, and is therefore a marginal increase in real terms. Of course, that does not allow for the abolition figures which I have just announced.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Can the Minister tell me and all the people in the Greater Manchester area why we, in what he rather patronisingly describes as the regions, should believe that the Arts Council, with its record of moving resources, mainly to the advantage of the south-east, will do anything of value for Greater Manchester following abolition? If there is a threat to the Royal Exchange theatre, the Hallé orchestra, the Contact theatre or the Whitworth gallery in Manchester—all of which now receive support from the Greater Manchester council—will the hon. Gentleman take action to ensure that those institutions and organisations continue to exist and to offer the same quality services as they now provide?

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council, under the chairmanship of Sir William Rees-Mogg, does an excellent job. Now that the council knows the total sum of money available, it will carefully judge how to allocate funds to the GLC and the metropolitan areas. This allocation is up to the Arts Council, as I frequently say. I want to give some encouragement to the Arts Council's so-called policy of regional development. This good policy is the right policy. That is why I announced other increases as well.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): My hon. Friend's statement will be welcomed by many, not least by the regional arts councils, which will soon be able to prepare next year's budgets. The statement nails the lie perpetrated by the metropolitan district councils that abolition would lead to reduced expenditure on the arts. Will my hon. Friend emphasise that local district councils, especially the metropolitan district councils, must not see the Arts Council as a means of opting out of their individual responsibilities? Will he remind the House that, in 1974, with the inception of the metropolitan counties, many metropolitan district councils opted out of support for the arts?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for stressing that point. This occasion provides a good basis for all the

successor authorities to play a positive part. This week, when I went to Newcastle, I was encouraged by the desire of the five successor authorities to play a part. I hope that today's announcement will encourage them. I hope also that hon. Members will do whatever they can to encourage local authorities.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): It illbehoves a Gainsborough Member to refuse support for the arts, and I do not. However, my hon. Friend will recall that when he was producing his masterpieces, there was no state subsidy for the arts. Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to stress that it must remain the Government's policy, despite his generosity with taxpayers' money, to pare Government subsidies for the arts as business sponsorship increases? Is he instituting studies in his Department to emulate the tax advantages in the United States, where art flourishes in the glorious garden of business, not state subsidy?

Mr. Luce: I stress that the Government's task, as we said in our 1983 manifesto, is to maintain our support for the arts on behalf of the taxpayer. When it comes to real growth in the arts sector, I think that we are entitled to look to the private sector to play an increasing role. This means not just business sponsorship, although that is important, but a paying public, through tax incentive schemes and private patronage. There are a variety of ways in which the private sector can encourage growth in the arts.

Mr. Buchan: Does this not all boil down to the simple proposition that there has been a marginal increase in real terms on the base figures, and a major and massive cut in the replacement figures?

The hon. Gentleman says so much about his support for the "Glory of the Garden". Is not even that minor increase in real terms lost as soon as we recognise that the "Glory of the Garden" must be paid for from central sources and that the recommendations in the Priestley report, which referred to £4·1 million, must also come out of that 5 per cent? Therefore, this minor real increase is, in fact, another major decrease.

How will the local authorities—the hon. Gentleman wants them to replace the decreased amounts—cope? He has forecast a continuous tapering down of support to these bodies. They are being cut and capped. Now the hon. Gentleman is promising a tapering down of support for them. Was not the White Paper forecast for 1986-87 correct in saying that there would be a 15 per cent. reduction in local authority funding of the arts? Will the hon. Gentleman try to square these most peculiar elliptical circles?

Mr. Luce: I suspect that I shall never satisfy the hon. Gentleman, whatever I say. I take that almost for granted. The hon. Gentleman used the term "cut". That is astonishing. The Government are giving an extra £43 million, which includes support for the arts, films, museums and galleries. It is a question not of a cut but of a partnership between central Government and local authorities. I look to the hon. Gentleman to play his part in encouraging local authorities to share in contributing to the arts.

Business of the House

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am concerned about the procedure to be adopted next Tuesday on the Okehampton Bypass (Confirmation of Orders) Bill. I am sure that you are aware that both within the House and outside there is considerable outrage at the Government's proposal and the procedure that they are seeking to adopt. I am sure that you will agree, Mr. Speaker, that it is extremely important that the procedures of the House of Commons are seen to be fair by all who are concerned about the Bill.

As I understand it, the Bill will come before the House without a Second Reading or Committee stage because of the special procedure of the Special Joint Committee. Even though it rejected the Bill, it is considered that that Committee has taken the place of Second Reading and the Committee stage. Had the Special Joint Committee considered the measure in this Session, that would have been a perfectly reasonable procedure. However, usual precedent means that if a public Bill starts in one Session and is not completed, it falls, and a private Bill would require a carry-over motion. This Bill will not have a Second Reading or Committee stage because it is claimed that, although it began last Session, it went to the Special Procedure Committee and that has replaced Second Reading and the Committee stage.

There ought to have been some procedure for carrying this Bill over from one Session to another, but there does not appear to have been any device to achieve that. It seems odd that we should allow a Bill that appears to have begun in the last Session to continue in this Session without the House giving approval for that to take place.

Will you, Mr. Speaker, give this matter some consideration and decide whether it is appropriate for the Bill to proceed to Report and Third Reading next Tuesday? That will mean that the House will have only one opportunity to debate the issue, and there will be no opportunity for people outside to consider the matter and for the Bill to be fully debated as would happen if we had a Second Reading, Committee stage, Report and Third Reading.

I looked with care at the whole question of special procedure. The House has used it so rarely that it is difficult to find a precedent that goes in either direction. However, I found a useful quote from the 1976 arguments in the House on the Shipbuilding Industries Bill. A statement was made by the present Secretary of State for Transport, who posed a question to Eric Varley. He said:

> "Is he advancing the constitutional doctrine that one can ignore the proprieties of parliamentary performance — the result of votes, the stages laid down for Bills—if, in the Government's opinion, the economic advantage of so doing is great enough? That is a wicked argument that he is setting out upon."—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1976; Vol. 914, c.236.]

I suggest that the Secretary of State for Transport is trying to set aside the decision of the Special Procedure Committee which decisively voted against this measure. We seem to be allowing a procedure that is not in keeping with our custom and practice of having proper separate stages of a Bill. I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will consider the matter.

Mr. Speaker: I should like to have the opportunity to look into the matter that the hon. Gentleman has raised. I shall do so and make a statement about it on Monday.

BILL PRESENTED

HOUSING (SCOTLAND)

Mr. Secretary Younger, supported by Mr. Michael Ancram and Mr. John Moore presented a Bill to amend the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980, the Housing Associations Act 1985 in its application to Scotland and the Building (Scotland) Act 1959; to make further provision as regards housing in Scotland; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed [Bill 10].

European Community Budgets

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Minister to open the debate, I should inform the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

5.4 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 5874/85, Letter of amendment No. 3 to the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1985, 6378/85 and 6379/85, New Draft General Budget of the European Communities for 1985, 6882/85, the European Parliament's amendments and modifications to the New Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1985, 6907/85 to 6914/85, the Council's decisions on the European Parliament's amendments and proposed modifications to the New Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1985, 7882/85 and COM(85)325, Communication from the Commission concerning key figures for the 1986 Budget, COM(85)175, Preliminary Draft General Budget of the European Communities for 1986, COM(85)550, Letter of amendment to the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1986, 9336/85, Draft General Budget of the European Communities for 1986, and 8479/85, Proposal for a Council regulation on Community financing of expenditure incurred in respect of the supply of agricultural products as food aid; and supports the Government's continuing policy of seeking greater equity and restraint in the Community's budgetary arrangements.

The motion lists nine sets of documents which the Scrutiny Committee has recommended for debate. Those relate to the Community budgets for 1985 and 1986. The House has recently debated the wider issues of Community finance during the Third Reading of what is now the Act permitting an increase in the Community VAT own resources ceiling to 1·4 per cent., and implementing the abatement system for the United Kingdom. I do not propose to cover the same ground again. Our concern this afternoon is with specific documents put forward in connection with the established annual budgetary process.

I should like to begin by thanking the Scrutiny Committee, under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), for its hard work on these, and many other documents. I assure the House that the Government attach great importance to safeguarding the interests of this House. The Scrutiny Committee has a vital role to play in this—a role that it carries out with distinction.

I now propose to place those documents in context by outlining, briefly, the main events in the 1985 and 1986 budgetary procedures to date.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I crave my hon. Friend's indulgence for an intervention at this early stage. I hope to be helpful. Will he take us through the procedures for 1985, and more particularly for 1986? Will he help the House by saying what stage the 1986 budgetary procedure has reached, and will he further help by saying what the European Parliament is currently seeking to do as regards the 1986 budget? On the basis of that information, will he tell us what the Government's reaction is likely to be in the Council of Ministers to what the European Parliament is seeking to do? That would give us a better idea of how the 1986 budget might end up.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is always helpful. He will know that this morning the European Parliament started voting on the draft budget and on various amendments to it. I shall come to that particular matter in due course.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): We are discussing not a food mountain, but a paper mountain. When will the hon. Gentleman deal with some of the points in detail? I do not know what it is all about. I do not know how, within reason, hon. Members can be expected to look at this mass of rubbish. That is what it is as far as I am concerned. How can we debate the issues properly, despite what the Scrutiny Committee has done? Will the Minister deal with some of the real issues involved, rather than with all this bumf in front of us?

Mr. Rifkind: I also thank the hon. Gentleman for his helpful intervention. I paid tribute to the Scrutiny Committee partly because it has given serious consideration to what is a substantial amount of detailed information, all of which relates to the budgetary procedures for 1985 and 1986. It is for the convenience of the House that all these matters be considered in this debate rather than as separate issues, because they are so interrelated.

The scrutiny debate, which I opened on 11 December last year, considered the preliminary draft budget and the draft budget for 1985. That debate took place just two days before the European Parliament voted by 390 votes to five to reject the latter. Consequently, from 1 January 1985, the Community functioned on the so-called provisional twelfths regime, being limited, in general, in each month to one twelfth of the expenditure on the equivalent items in 1984. The House will recall that the European Parliament's declared reason for rejecting the budget was that it did not provide sufficient revenue for a full 12 months. The Parliament chose to disregard the Council's assurance, given in October last year, that the necessary additional funds would be made available in the course of 1985.

The budget process had then to start again. In April of this year, acting on the basis of the Commission's letter of amendment No. 3 to the 1985 preliminary draft budget —one of the documents before us today—the Council established a new draft budget for 1985. That is also before us today, in the documents referred to by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer).

Apart from the additions contained in the letter of amendment, which provided for an additional 1,955 mecu of agricultural expenditure and a 26 mecu increase in food aid appropriations to ensure that the Dublin European Council commitments on food aid were honoured, provision for expenditure in the draft budget was the same as that agreed in November 1984.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): For once in his lifetime I believe that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) made a serious point about the weight of paper with which we are submerged in this debate. There are 1,000 sides of foolscap—a third of a million words. Surely my hon. Friend can give us some hope for the future that these Community measures will be put to us in a more digestible form so that hon. Members can make a more serious contribution to the debate. I notice that my hon. Friend is reading his speech instead of his customary method of speaking without notes. Is that because he is finding it difficult to plough through the detail? If so, may I ask him to go a little more slowly so that milder souls like myself can follow what he is saying?

Mr. Rifkind: I appreciate the point that my hon. Friend has made. It is precisely because of the complexity of these documents that an explanatory memorandum is provided which is intended to summarise the contents of each of the documents in a way that will be helpful to the House. I would also make the point, which I think is a fair one, that we are here dealing with documents that cover the complete budget for the European Community for two years. It would be somewhat extraordinary if they could properly be presented to the House in all their complexity except through the fairly bulky documents provided. Even the budgets for individual members of the Community would be unlikely to be less bulky, in terms of their full details, than the documents that we are dealing with today.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): First, I would certainly encourage the Minister to go slowly for the benefit of his hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) as this may well bring some benefit to our proceedings.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman might like to consider setting up, instead of a scrutiny committee, an abbreviation committee.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who has also made a most helpful intervention.

The Council agreed last year that the net additional expenditure should be covered by national contributions under a second intergovernmental agreement. In sterling, the total of the intergovernmental agreement is about £1,200 million, of which the United Kingdom's share is some £250 million. Authority to pay this has been given by the European Communities (Finance) Act, which became law two weeks ago. Our net payment under the 1985 intergovernmental agreement is eligible for rebate under the Fontainebleau mechanism, and its net cost, taking into account receipts to United Kingdom farmers and traders, should, therefore, be reduced to about £40 million.

Returning to the 1985 budget process, at its May plenary session, the European Parliament proposed amendments and modifications to the new 1985 draft budget. These are set out in document 6882/85. In total, they were unacceptable and, on its Second Reading, the Council took decisions on the Parliament's amendments and modifications which respected the maximum rate provision, allocating an increase in 1985 in non-obligatory expenditure of 8·5 per cent. The 1985 budget was finally adopted by the European Parliament on 15 June, thereby ending the provisional twelfths regime.

The need to agree additional provision of 1,955 mecu for agricultural support expenditure in the context of the 1985 budget related to policy decisions taken in past years before the budget discipline agreement took effect. The new budget discipline procedures, which form part of the Fontainebleau settlement, come into full effect for the 1986 budget, and that is the first time that they will be relevant to the budget in question.

A most significant element in the 1985 budget was its provision for payment of the United Kingdom's 1,000 mecu abatement of VAT for 1984, as agreed at the Fontainebleau summit in June 1984. This, as agreed subsequently, was to take place when the Community's new own resources decision had been ratified by all member states. This marked an end to the old system of expenditure refunds and the beginning of the new system, whereby United Kingdom net contributions are substantially reduced in the following year by an abatement of our

[Mr. Rifkind]

VAT payments to the Community. The full Fontainebleau abatement system will operate for 1986 and for future years.

As the House will be aware, under the new system, unlike the past, it will not be possible for the European Parliament to prevent or delay the payment of the sums that are due. That is a substantial advantage, and one which successive British Governments have sought to achieve.

I turn now to the 1986 budgetary procedure. The Commission's outline of the 1986 preliminary draft budget set out the main features of the Commission's proposals. These provided for a level of non-obligatory expenditure well above what the Council thought appropriate, although the proposed level of agricultural guarantee spending was within the limits imposed by budget discipline.

The agreement at the ECOFIN Council on 8 July on a reference framework for the 1986 budget marked a further stage in the more rigorous control of Community spending for which we have been working. The reference framework sets out maximum amounts of expenditure on agricultural markets, on non-obligatory expenditure and on other obligatory expenditure. It also provides for the impact of enlargement and the problems of the overhang of past commitments in the Community's structural funds to be considered during the budgetary procedure.

Within the reference framework there is a specific financial guideline for agricultural expenditure, designed to ensure that spending on agricultural market support measures increases no faster than the own resources base.

Mr. Forth: Could my hon. Friend put this in the context of the fact that the reference framework can itself be changed and that, therefore, the impression that may be given to the House—although I am sure that my hon. Friend does not mean to give it—that there is something fixed and immutable about this discipline, might well be breached if there were a decision during the course of the year to change the reference framework, which would allow an increase in expenditure?

Mr. Rifkind: That is certainly a theoretical possibility, but one must remember that the reference framework consists of the agricultural guarantee expenditure, of non-obligatory expenditure and of other obligatory expenditure, other than the agricultural aspects. Of these component parts, the greatest is the agricultural guarantee expenditure, and that is controlled by the financial guideline, under which any increase must be less than the growth in the own resources base. So there is an in-built control as far as agricultural expenditure is concerned. There is also a formula which limits the increase in non-obligatory expenditure that the Parliament can insist on, according to the maximum rate that has been laid down. It is a complicated procedure, but it enables control to be exercised on that aspect of spending.

Mr. Marlow: Could my hon. Friend explain to the House beyond doubt how the financial mechanism will work? Let us assume that the financial mechanism said that a certain amount of money should be spent on agriculture. If there were massive harvests and the world was flooded with grain and all sorts of other commodities, and the Community had to offload at massive discounts many of the surpluses that were being held in its bulging stores, how would the system then operate?

Mr. Rifkind: As my hon. Friend is well aware, the Community in this respect can be no different from any individual member state. It is quite right to say that there can be circumstances which, by their very nature, are unpredictable. That is not a problem peculiar to the Community. It is one that this Government, or any other national Government, face if they have a system of agricultural support. We have explained on previous occasions how the system is intended to operate. There is nothing new that I can convey to my hon. Friend on this particular occasion. I entirely accept that, with a system of agricultural support, it is impossible to predict with certainty the effects of climate on agricultural yields. I would emphasise, however, that it is not a problem peculiar to our membership of the Community or to the way in which the Community operates at present. It would be true of any system of agricultural support in either a member state or in the Community, whatever reform could be agreed upon.

It is important to make that point because it is sometimes implied that somehow there is a magic formula available which, if only people were prepared to accept it, would somehow solve these problems. Many improvements and reforms could be made, but we should not allow ourselves to be led into believing that somehow climate itself can be anticipated and taken into account at the beginning of the financial year.

Mr. Marlow: Under previous systems we had the advantage, of course, that if we had surpluses and the price fell, the consumer got the advantage of it, even though the taxpayer paid more money. That does not happen under this system.

Mr. Rifkind: Not as much as we would like it to happen, that is perfectly true; but my hon. Friend should acknowledge the fact that over the past two or three years all the discussions that Agriculture Ministers have had at the annual price fixing have, for the first time in the Community's history, been not about the level of increase but about the level of reduction in agricultural price support. In each of the past three years, there have been real reductions in price support, to take account of the factors to which my hon. Friend has referred. I accept that these cuts in agricultural price support have not been as substantial as the British Government would have liked, but it is fair to acknowledge, at least, that the whole trend in the Community has changed in a very dramatic way. This year the West German Government held out against the other nine member states and acknowledged the need for some reduction; but the debate was about the size of the reduction, not the principle.

The 1986 draft budget sets a spending limit for the Community of Ten—without Spain and Portugal—of 220,619 mecu of relevant agricultural expenditure. That is only 2·5 per cent. above the 1985 total and below the Community's inflation rate. That is an important achievement, which is fully in accordance with the agreement at Fontainebleau that the financial guidelines should be respected. We are talking about a cut, not an increase.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): That is rubbish and a fiddle.

Mr. Rifkind: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity later to explain why he thinks that is rubbish.

Separate provision is made for agricultural spending in Spain and Portugal. The Commission is committed to drawing up proposals in the light of the guidelines, and it has done so.

The Council's setting of the 1986 reference framework represents a new departure in the budgetary procedure and implements the budget discipline conclusions agreed last December by the Council. It is encouraging that decisions which were strongly attacked by many—including some hon. Members — because it was thought that the proposals would not be implemented in good faith, have been respected by member states and the Commission. Even the differences between the Commission and the Council of Ministers are not about whether the financial guidelines should be respected, but about what level of spending within the guidelines is appropriate.

The 1986 preliminary draft budget, as put forward by the Commission, includes the 1,400 mecu estimated abatement for the United Kingdom in respect of its excessive net contribution in 1985. For the first time the automatic system agreed at Fontainebleau, which ensures that two thirds of the United Kingdom's excess payment is received as abatement in the following year, will come into operation. This is a major step towards greater budgetary equity.

The Commission's original expenditure proposals in the preliminary draft budget were in excess of what the Council considered reasonable for 1986. The September Budget Council therefore, cut back the budgetary provision to more acceptable levels, while making it clear that further consideration would be given to the special problems posed by enlargement.

The Council established its draft budget and the European Parliament is voting today on amendments and modifications. They will be considered at the Budget Council's second meeting on 26 November.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) intervened earlier to ask about the likely implications of the European Parliament's debates on these matters. Voting is taking place today on a series of amendments. Amendments will be proposed which, if accepted, will result in a substantial increase in the budget. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire is right to draw attention to the history of the European Parliament. Amendments passed by the European Parliament will be considered by the Budget Council in November. The British Government have made their views known, as have other Governments. We shall obviously wish to study the detailed amendments, but it is unlikely that we shall be sympathetic to the increases contemplated.

Mr. Heffer: Can the Minister explain in clear, simple terms what, under the draft budget, our net contribution will be to the European Community and what benefit we will derive from it?

Mr. Rifkind: The Commission's proposal was substantially reduced by the Council of Ministers. The draft budget sent to the European Parliament represents an effective VAT rate for member states of 1·17 per cent. of the ceiling. For the United Kingdom the figure is substantially less at less than 1 per cent. because the United Kingdom has the benefit of the two thirds rebate agreed under the Fontainebleau proposals, notwithstanding the House's approval of an increase in the overall ceiling to 1·4 per cent.

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) asked how much money is to be paid by the United Kingdom. In the autumn statement it was said that the amount payable in 1985-86 would be 800 mecu, whereas in January this year that sum was said to be only 750 mecu. Next year the sum will be 650 mecu when it was to be 640 mecu. In 1987-88 the sum will be a staggering 1,150 mecus instead of 830 mecu. We are to pay 300 mecu more to the EEC in three years' time than we thought we should have to pay a few months ago.

Mr. Rifkind: We acknowledge that if overall Community expenditure increases, the contribution by all member states is bound to go up. However, the United Kingdom has the protection that is not available to any other member state. The United Kingdom's contribution to any new expenditure approved for the Community, instead of being 21 per cent. of the total, is reduced under the Fontainebleau mechanism by a full two thirds down to 7 per cent. France will pay 27 per cent. and West Germany 32 per cent.

I do not deny that the United Kingdom's contribution will be increased, but the United Kingdom, although one of the larger member states, will not pay 93 per cent. of the additional expenditure.

Mr. Foulkes: The Minister cannot get away from the fact that the British Government are today budgeting for 380 mecu more than they were in January. That represents a huge increase in payments to the EEC. How does the Minister explain it?

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the bulk of Community expenditure is for agriculture. United Kingdom farmers benefit considerably from that expenditure. The United Kingdom also receives considerable benefit from the other structural funds. Part of the increase in budgetary requirement is needed to pay Britain's rebates under the Fontainebleau mechanism. That is a balanced assessment.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Do not my hon. Friend's devastating figures understate the real position? To the net contribution we must add £350 million a year of so-called British receipts which do not come to Britain but are simply subsidies to enable British traders to export cheap food to Russia?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is referring to the export subsidy system. He knows perfectly well that the United Kingdom Government have been seeking reforms of the common agricultural policy which would remove the problem of structural surplus that leads to the system that he rightly criticised. My hon. Friend also knows that, as long as we have structural surpluses, it is sensible and in the interests of Community taxpayers to try to dispose of them in a helpful rather than a harmful way.

Any proposals taken up by the Soviet Union are the same as those to which any other country which wishes to purchase from Community surpluses is entitled. There are no special terms or provisions for the Soviet Union.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I follow that point. As my hon. Friend knows, I received a helpful letter from my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food referring to a new proposal under which beef is exported to Russia at 15p a pound. In the

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

Government's consideration of reform, would it not be more sensible for the beef to be sold to British rather than to Russian consumers?

Mr. Rifkind: The provision available to the Soviet Union is identical to the provision that is available to any other state interested in purchasing from Community surplus stocks. The price of agricultural products in the Community is determined annually by Agriculture Ministers. We have made clear our dissatisfaction with many of the arrangements, but until there is sufficient will power to achieve the changes that we wish to see——

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I thought there was.

Mr. Rifkind: No, I have deliberately sought not to exaggerate the position. My hon. Friend knows perfectly well what I have said. There is a greater realisation than ever before of the need to cut rather than to increase agricultural prices and to deal with the problem of surpluses. I have never suggested that somehow that problem has been sweetly resolved in the way that we should like.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend comment on the Commission's proposals for reducing the surplus in cereals? Those proposals, which are of great interest to the British farming community, include a two-tier system. What is the Government's attitude towards that suggestion?

Mr. Rifkind: The Commission has put forward a series of proposals about the future not just of cereals but of the whole common agricultural policy. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that it might be more appropriate if the details of those proposals were dealt with by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and his colleagues. Those proposals, although crucially important, are not strictly relevant to the documents before us.

Mr. Budgen: They are relevant.

Mr. Rifkind: No, because they have not yet been properly considered, even by Agriculture Ministers. They are certainly not relevant to the budgetary documents that we are discussing today.

I wish to discuss the letter of amendment to the 1986 preliminary draft budget. The letter proposes changes to increase the United Kingdom's VAT abatement under the Fontainebleau system—to reduce the amount of VAT that we shall pay to the Community in 1986. Those changes resulted from an extra VAT payment that we made last August, under the Community's annual VAT adjustment procedure, to correct underpayments of VAT contributions in 1984 and earlier years. The increase in our entitlement to abatement is 264 mecu — about £155 million. The Commission felt that prudent financial management required it to make provision for a correction of this size in the main annual budget.

As my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury, informed the House on 30 October, at column *501*, the ECOFIN Council discussed the letter of amendment at its meeting in Luxembourg on 30 October and agreed that the United Kingdom was entitled to receive the additional 264 mecu during 1986. The Commission was invited to bring forward a supplementary budget in September 1986 to take account not only of the 264 mecu but of any other corrections shown to be necessary by the budgetary information then available. The Council undertook to take the necessary decisions on the basis of the Commission's proposals at that time.

The possibility of such a supplementary budget is clearly provided for in the agreed methodology, but it is not obligatory. The undertaking to present a supplementary budget next September is therefore an important gain for the United Kingdom. Our right to the 264 mecu in 1986 has been formally acknowledged. We expect that the actual increase in our abatement will be considerably larger than this, when account is taken of outturn information on receipts from the 1985 budget.

The final document recommended for debate today, draft instrument 8479/85, also relates to the 1986 budgetary procedure. The proposal would affect the 1986 budget and subsequent years. The draft instrument would affect the classification of Community financing of expenditure incurred in the supply of agricultural products as food aid. This is a matter with which my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury will deal if he is able to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): If the Government's view on the document which the Scrutiny Committee has recommended for urgent debate is not to be known until his hon. Friend deals with it at the end of the debate, it will be impossible for hon. Members to comment on the Government's position, which I thought was the object of tonight's debate.

Mr. Rifkind: I am happy to inform the hon. Gentleman that the Government take the view, as do the French and other Governments in the Community, that it is inappropriate to accede to the Commission's proposal, not because we do not wish to provide sufficient food aid, but because the means of provision are not thought to be appropriate. My hon. Friend will be happy to expand on that later.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I am trying to understand this proposal, which I have read several times. I appreciate my hon. Friend's points, but the proposal is that most of the cost of food aid should be transferred to what is called "chapter nine" in the European Community budget. That would have the effect of taking a substantial chunk of agricultural spending out of the agricultural budget. The Commission is determined to curb agricultural spending within certain limits, but is this not the creative accounting that we condemn in Liverpool? Is it not simply a device whereby the amount spent on food is presented as being less than it is?

The other proposal, which my hon. Friend has not mentioned, calls for the downgrading in value of existing food mountains and transferring their cost to a separate non-agricultural budget. If these proposals are a device to make agricultural spending appear less than it is, will the Government condemn that and ensure that it does not happen?

Mr. Rifkind: The Community has had a food aid programme for some years. The opinion of the British Government, and that of the majority of Community Governments, is that any emergency food aid should be provided through the food aid programme, which may have to be increased if necessary, rather than through some

new device such as that proposed by the Commission. We believe that to be a more sensible way of dealing with the matter.

The Community budget continues to raise many problems for the United Kingdom, as for other member states. However, we have made a start during the past 18 months in seeking to apply the same principles of budgetary rigour and equity to Community expenditure as apply in other member states.

This afternoon I have tried to put forward the Government's view on budgetary matters that are of crucial importance to the Community. I hope that when the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) responds to the debate she will not just criticise what she perceives to be the problems of Government policy, but will tell the House how a Labour Government, if we ever have one, intend to deal with budgetary problems and the future of the Community. That is an important task because an Opposition who wish to present themselves as a credible alternative Government have an obligation of that kind.

I hope the hon. Member for Thurrock will also use the opportunity to comment on a crucial document published recently by the Labour party that is very relevant to what we are discussing today. It is headed:

"Jobs or the Treaty of Rome? A Choice for Labour".

The document is important because it was largely written and edited by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) who, as well as being an hon. Member, is also a shadow Front Bench spokesman on trade. Trade is so relevant to the European Community that what he says on the matter is of crucial significance.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): Before the hon. Gentleman proceeds, no doubt he is aware that that document is not an official expression of Labour party policy and that a member of the Opposition Front Bench team is entitled to express a personal opinion, just as the Secretary of State for Energy is entitled to express his opinion about Government policy.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, indeed. We are all entitled to express our opinions. We do not normally find the views of Government spokesmen being disowned by the Government, but the hon. Lady seems anxious to disown the comments of the shadow Front Bench spokesman for trade.

Dr. McDonald: Does that mean that the hon. Gentleman supports the criticisms which have recently been made by the Secretary of State for Energy of his Government's economic policy? It would be interesting to hear the hon. Gentleman expand on that. Why does he not do so?

Mr. Rifkind: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made it clear that she is happy with everything that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has said, I see no reason to differ from her assessment. The crucial difference is that the hon. Lady is not able to do the same. She is seeking to disown what the shadow Front Bench spokesman for trade has said. As my hon. Friends may be getting curious about what the shadow Front Bench spokesman for trade said that the hon. Lady is so keen to disown, I shall be happy to refer to it.

The crucial point is that the title of the document contains the words "A choice for Labour". The choice that the shadow spokesman for trade has said that the Labour party faces is either to renege on the Labour party's programme or to break Community law. It is in such conflict with the new commitment of the Leader of the Opposition to observe the rule of law that the House is entitled to know what the hon. Member for Dagenham has said.

I refer to page 18 of the document where the hon. Gentleman deals with the various proposals of the Labour party:

"Exchange controls, tariffs and other means of limiting imports, the use of public purchasing policy to favour British suppliers, subsidies, price controls, grants, soft loans, direct investment, planning agreements, changes of VAT and other taxes."

He then says:

"These and many other aspects of Labour policy would all fall foul of the Treaty of Rome."

This is well worth listening to:

"There can be no doubt that much of what the next Labour Government must do in order to defeat unemployment and to revise our economy would be forbidden by European Community rules . . . A Labour Government which agreed to comply with the European Community obligations under all these heads might as well abandon its programme before it starts."

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): A very good idea.

Mr. Rifkind: As my hon. Friend says, that would be a good idea. The remedy that the shadow Front Bench spokesman for trade has put forward to the predicament is not that a Labour Government should abandon their proposed policies which would fall foul of our international treaty obligations and our legal obligations; but that we should simply fail to implement them and that the first thing that a Labour Government should do on taking office is to repeal the provisions of the European Communities Act 1972 that require us, by law, to implement in the United Kingdom the provisions of the treaty of Rome.

We are entitled to ask the Leader of the Opposition, who says that he believes in the rule of law, whether he would make the choice that the hon. Member for Dagenham calls upon him to make. It is not a choice which he can fudge, because his hon. Friend actually says:

"The Labour movement must be clear that compliance with European Community rules is an issue which cannot be ducked or set aside. It will be crucial to the accomplishment of the tasks we set ourselves in government. It must be resolved well before we take power and it must be resolved so that Labour's programme for Britain is given priority over all other considerations."

I conclude, in a very friendly, constructive and inquiring spirit, by inviting the hon. Member for Thurrock to express the views of Her Majesty's Opposition.

I commend the motion to the House.

5.45 pm

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): I beg to move as an amendment to the Question, in line 13, leave out from 'aid' to end and add

'and deplores the continued and uncontrolled increase in farm spending, and the agreement of British Ministers to preserve the level of farm spending in the 1986 draft Budget by accepting a cut of six per cent. in real terms in food aid, cuts in the Regional and Social Funds, and the omission of special provisions for the accession of Spain and Portugal.'.

Before I turn to the documents mentioned in the motion I want to comment briefly on what the Minister has just said. He has, of course, adopted the time-honoured manoeuvre of trying to distract attention from the faults of his own Government by attacking the Opposition. I am not here to discuss amongst all the documents in front of us

[Dr. Oonagh McDonald]

what is simply an informal contribution to a public debate on these matters, and I suggest that the Minister got a bit carried away with his diversionary tactics. Some of the proposals which he read out with such glee were beginning to capture the interest and attention of hon. Members behind him, who he knows full well are deeply critical not only of his Government's behaviour within the European Community but of the very structure of the European Community itself.

Mr. Marlow: If the House decided in its wisdom, which it might think it wise to do, to repeal section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972, would not anything that it then did be legal?

Dr. McDonald: There is no reason why I should pursue that red herring.

Mr. Rifkind: I think that the House is entitled to have at least one clear final expression of the hon. Lady's view. She is speaking for the Opposition. May we have a categorical statement that Her Majesty's Official Opposition—the Labour party—do not accept, indeed reject, the recommendation of the shadow Front Bench spokesman on trade because it would lead to Britain not complying with its international treaty obligations? A straightforward answer would be helpful.

Dr. McDonald: I will not answer to an informal document. The hon. Gentleman has had his bit of fun—because that is all it was. He has tried in his comments to distract attention from what his own Government have done with the 1985 budget and the 1986 budget and what the Government are failing to do over the common agricultural policy—all issues which are highly relevant to the pile of documents before us. It is far more important to concentrate our attention on those documents. As I said, the hon. Gentleman has had his bit of fun and it is now over. He will have to answer both our criticisms and the criticisms which many of his hon. Friends will make about the 1985 budget and the 1986 budget.

What has happened with the 1985 budget is that our net contribution to the European Community this year will be more than £1 billion, £300 million more than was expected in January of this year. The Government tried to suggest that that amount was not expected even though it should have been at that time. The increase of £300 million is due to a supplementary payment of £190 million in January 1985, to a supplementary payment of £250 million or so which has now been approved as part of the EC financial arrangements, and to the change at the time of the 1984 budget in the method of VAT collection.

The excuses that the Government made about the additional £300 million being unexpected do not hold up. The first and last were known in January, and the need for the additional £250 million was known at the time of the White Paper. Thus, the net budget contribution has increased this year and has increased further during the year.

I will not follow the Minister into the history of the 1985 budget—its defeat in the European Assembly and the ultimately increased budget that was finally accepted—because I want to discuss the amount of money that we are paying into the EC this year, for that is the issue that the Minister tried to evade.

Even with the 1985 budget, we are not entirely sure of the outcome. In its recent report, the Commission said of the 1984 budget—the farm-spending budget—that dairy spending had reached a new peak. It was 24 per cent. up on 1983.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage) *rose*——

Dr. McDonald: The hon. Gentleman's moment has certainly passed. [HON MEMBERS: "Give way."] Perhaps it would be kind of me to do so.

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Lady has spoken of the size of the net contribution for 1985. What is the Commission's estimate of the amount of the abatement that we shall be paid next year in respect of that contribution?

Dr. McDonald: My hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) will deal with that when he winds up the debate.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East) *rose*——

Dr. McDonald: I will not give way again.

As for the 1984 budget, the cost-stabilising effect of the dairy quotas did not show up in the figures; farm spending continued to increase. The latest estimate for farm spending in 1985 is over 21 billion ecu, which is a 15 per cent. increase on the 1984 budget. Even that figure, however, does not show the whole cost of the burden to the taxpayer. Various elements have yet to enter into the 1985 budget, and that means that we cannot know the final outcome. For example, Andre Khan, the agricultural policy adviser to the Commissioner Lord Cockfield, in a paper to the United Kingdom agricultural conference in the last month, said:

> "At the end of 1985, intervention stocks will probably be worth 9 billion ecu. The annual cost of servicing these stocks is about 3·5 billion ecu, which represents a contingent liability which has not yet been paid for."

That is one element in the 1985 budget that is yet to come.

Another element in that budget that is yet to come is the cost of the cereal harvest. The harvest runs from July until late November, and therefore we have no final information of the cost of that. *The Times* pointed out on 14 June that failure to reach agreement on the cereals price meant that the EC would have to police its budget carefully if its costs were not to exceed income. During this year, farm spending is undoubtedly entirely farm led. We do not know what the results will be; hence we do not know what the costs will be.

All those pressures have again led the Community to its usual desperate measures—for example, feeding a large part of the butter surplus back to the cattle herds that produced it, hiring additional storage capacity for butter in Austria and Switzerland and hiring ships with cold storage capacity in France, Italy and Ireland to hold surplus beef, which is passing to the intervention stocks at the rate of 25,000 tonnes a week. *The Economist* summed it up on 23 June last by saying:

> "Mrs. Thatcher eats her words, but nobody eats the surpluses."

These costly surpluses will continue because the Prime Minister threw away the chance of agricultural reform, the radical change in the farm policy that alone would have ended such waste. No wonder the Minister referred to a pamphlet at the conclusion of his remarks; and he did not want the House to be reminded that the costs of the 1985 budget had yet to be settled. Those costs could continue to increase. He wanted a diversionary tactic. The 1985

budget is part of a steady increase in the United Kingdom's net contribution. In 1982 it was £605 million; in 1983, £647 million; in 1984, £656 million; and in 1985 it will be at least £1·2 billion.

Despite those facts, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, speaking at the Tory party conference, boasted that he had made cuts where cuts were needed, and one item he mentioned was Britain's contribution to the EC. *The Guardian*, on 10 October, described the Chancellor as being "in a boisterous mood." Certainly his recital of the facts about the EC had as little contact with reality as most of his recitals of facts.

Our net contributions to the EC in the six years of Tory rule have totalled over £4 billion. The average has been £708 million, compared with Labour's average during our years in office of £450 million. That is the reality of the 1985 budget. No wonder the Minister cited a list of documents: he wanted to avoid the fundamental issues relating to the costs of our EC contributions in the past six years.

Questions remain to be asked about the 1985 budget. Apparently, Greece is the only country that has paid its contribution under the intergovernmental agreement of 23 April. But it is not clear whether Greece has paid half or the total of its budget contribution. I asked the Library to inquire whether the United Kingdom or other member states had paid part or all of their contributions to the EC budget. The reply from the staff of the Library included the comment that the Treasury official asked the question was "very coy" about Greece and the other member states. As "coy" is not an adjective that springs to mind in relation to the Minister of State, Treasury, perhaps he will be less coy than his officials when he replies to the debate. Have we now paid? If not, when do we expect to pay? Have the others paid, and have they paid the whole of their contributions? Those are important questions about the 1985 budget.

We have not yet received the £600 million abatement, as agreed at Fontainebleau, in respect of the 1984 budget. The statement on the 1985 budget says that the Government assume that the abatement will be received before the end of this year. Time is marching on and we still have not received it. Its payment depends upon each member state ratifying the new own resources decision and notifying Brussels. Can the Minister of State, Treasury, also tell us how many states have carried this out and when we can expect to receive the £600 million? This is a complex issue. The ratification of the new own resources agreement is tied up with enlargement. Payment could therefore be delayed. Have the Government taken into account the possibility of such a delay? How long will we have to wait for the £600 million?

The Commission's original draft budget for 1986 amounted to 34 billion ecu. That is equivalent to a VAT take-up of 1·35 per cent. and it is only 900 million ecu below the level consistent with the new 1·4 per cent. ceiling. The Commission's proposals were therefore already knocking pretty hard on the new ceiling of 1·4 per cent. Most of it was to be put towards agricultural guarantees. The Commission's initial proposals were only 150 million ecu below the budgetary discipline ceiling, which does not leave much scope for dealing with the climatic problems to which the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs was at last forced to refer in his speech. Important cuts were made to the Commission's proposals. They included substantial cuts in the money available for research and innovation, money that would be very useful for the development of the Community as a whole.

The Finance Ministers got to work at their meeting in July and set a limit of 29·6 billion ecu for the 1986 budget. For the first time, they used the new budgetary discipline system. The *Financial Times* of 9 July 1985 reported the Chancellor as saying that it was a

"very positive development in the context of budgetary discipline."

By September the Council of Ministers had agreed a budget of 32 billion ecu. This was more than 2 billion ecu above the self-imposed limit of 29 billion ecu which the Finance Ministers had agreed earlier.

What, then, was the Chancellor's assessment of the Finance Ministers' agreement in July? Even the Council of Ministers overturned it. That was quite apart from the activities of the Commission and the European Parliament. The Agriculture Ministers no doubt had a role to play in the 2 billion ecu increase. They met after the meeting of Finance Ministers in July. According to the report in the *Financial Times* of 25 September 1985, they unanimously agreed

"that something needed to be done. But to a man they disagreed as to what it should be . . . But the Ministers did find one area of agreement: that budgetary discipline provisions restricting farm spending should not necessarily be restricted in the future. However, it was not clear whether Mr. Jopling was in the room at the time of this discussion."

It seems that the Government have given up to such an extent on any possibility of reforming farm spending under the common agricultural policy that they have taken to sending an invisible man to Brussels.

The Commission formed its own view of budgetary discipline. It said that in legal terms the 1986 budget was in no way bound by budgetary discipline and that it could not be compared with previous budgets because this was the first budget for the 12 members of the European Community. Since the Agriculture Ministers have decided that budgetary discipline need not be applied in future, and since the Commission has set aside budgetary discipline for the 1986 budget, as reported in *Agence Europe* of 16-17 September 1985, there is very little hope of containing it.

The Council then cut the Commission's proposed draft. It cut the regional and social funds by not making proper provision for the accession of Spain and Portugal. It was a budget for 10 countries only. It also, apparently, cut food aid. That issue was raised in our debate on 22 October 1985. The words of the Minister of State, Treasury, in that debate—that there is no need now for emergency food aid because there has been rain in Africa—were much quoted on both sides of the House.

There is a problem about precisely how much food aid, in which I include emergency food aid, is being set aside by the Community in 1986. I hope that the Minister of State, Treasury, will spell out exactly what he said at the meeting which was described in our debate on 22 October. Can he tell us precisely how much food aid will be made available and how much of it will be emergency food aid? He knows that on both sides of the House there is much concern about this matter. Although there has been rain in South Africa, it has by no means solved the problem. The people have eaten the seed corn. There is little left to be planted and the famine will undoubtedly continue.

In view of this great anxiety, I hope that the Minister of State, Treasury, will devote some time to telling the

[Dr. McDonald]

House precisely what the Community proposes to do about food aid, including emergency food aid, and what attitude the British Government are adopting towards it. All right hon. and hon. Members were deeply concerned when they realised that only Ireland and Denmark opposed an apparent cut in emergency food aid. Not only this House but the country wants the British Government to give a firm commitment that all possible aid will be given by the Community as well as by our Government to the famine-stricken areas of Africa.

We know how great is the extent of public concern. Apart from the Live Aid concert, many similar concerts have been held since then. The people of this country have generously given millions of pounds to help the starving in Africa. They want their Government to reflect their views and their deep feelings, even in the dryness of budget debates in Brussels. I hope that the Minister will tell us exactly what line the British Government will take.

In our debate on 22 October we discussed making provision for the accession of Spain and Portugal and the impact of the proposed budget cuts by the Council of Ministers. The Minister of State, Treasury, knows that Spanish and Portuguese Ministers were present as observers at the Council of Ministers meeting. According to *The Economist* of 5 October, they were

"shocked at the prospect of being net contributors in their first year as members."

Mr. Christophersen also made it plain that the council decision

"undermines the Community's credibility and places the two new member states in a difficult situation."

He added that Portugal, as one of the poorest countries,

"cannot be asked to pay a vast amount of money to enter the Community."

That view was also reported in Europe on 20 September 1985.

What view do the Government take about the difference which will be caused to the 1986 budget by the accession of Spain and Portugal? Do the Government want to be part of any discussions which make life difficult for these two countries when they enter the European Community? Are not the Government aware of the foreign policy implications of taking such a line? What action will the Government take when the 1986 budget proposals are finally sorted out?

The Minister quite rightly referred to the debates and votes currently taking place in Strasbourg. He will know that speaker after speaker has accused Ministers of failing in their responsibilities to the new member states and of violating the rules of the treaty of Rome by failing to provide for known commitments.

We know that those votes will increase the expenditure for the 1986 budget, which will be raised beyond what the Council of Ministers proposed. It will not be such a protracted debate as last year, as I understand that the European Assembly has not voted to reject the budget this time, but is voting on a long series of amendments to it —I believe about 600. Nevertheless, the budget will create problems. What line will the Government take? Even the Commission's proposals pushed the 1986 budget near the 1·4 per cent. ceiling. If the proposals of the European Assembly are accepted, that ceiling may be reached in 1986. What will happen then?

In our debate on 22 October, the Treasury Minister, in response to repeated interventions from hon. Members on both sides of the House, said that he found it impossible to envisage circumstances in which the Government would return to the House either to ask for another intergovernmental agreement or for an agreement to raise the 1·4 per cent. ceiling. Why did he find that so difficult to imagine? After all, we expect the European Assembly to vote to increase the 1986 budget.

Nothing has been done to reform the CAP and the budgetary discipline rules in practice. Eventually, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, was forced to draw attention to some of the holes in the budgetary discipline framework. He was obliged to talk about the climate and the exceptional or aberrant circumstances that are allowed for in the statement on the budgetary discipline rules. He could have mentioned other elements—for example, changes in the dollar-ecu rate. If the ecu falls against the dollar, that will make an enormous difference to the costs of running the CAP. When the Minister thinks about the implications of admitting such obvious facts, neither he nor the Treasury Minister should find it impossible to envisage circumstances in which the Government return to the House to ask for more money.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Lady is a very intelligent woman, and will understand that the Minister of State, Treasury is also very intelligent. When he said that he could not visualise circumstances in which he would return to the House to ask for another intergovernmental agreement, he was well aware of the possibilities to which the hon. Lady referred. He knew that the dollar might change in value; he knew that there might be a massive surplus of European agricultural commodities. However, even knowing that, he is not prepared to return to the House to ask for another intergovernmental agreement because he has given us a commitment that he will not do so. I believe my hon. Friend, as I am sure the hon. Lady does.

Dr. McDonald: The hon. Gentleman is indeed very trusting. I hope that the Government are not obliged to ask the House for more money. However, the hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that it is highly likely that they will have to ask either for an increase in the ceiling or for another intergovernmental agreement. I think that the hon. Gentleman's words should not be taken at their face value. His expectations of what the Government will do are pretty much the same as mine, judging by his contributions to previous debates.

The real problem is that nothing has been done to reform the CAP. Last July, the House of Lords warned that the CAP was at a crossroads—left unreformed, it could break down. If that happened, said their Lordships, they feared that the existence of the EEC would be in jeopardy. Many hon. Members might welcome that prospect, but that is not the Government's view. They should heed that stern warning—as, indeed, they should heed the many other warnings that they have received from another place. Of course, they will not do so.

If the evidence of officials at the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food is anything to go by, the Government are no longer in favour of radical reform of the CAP.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): The hon. Lady has spoken at great length about what the Government may or may not do. Will she explain the Labour party's policy on

reforming the CAP? Would it be by virtue of price, of quotas or by taking land out of production? Which of those is it?

Dr. McDonald: I will not be diverted——

Mr. Baldry: It is the central issue.

Dr. McDonald: I wish that the hon. Gentleman would sit down. The Government have been in power for the past six years, and for much of that time they have spoken about the need for a radical reform of the CAP, yet they have done nothing. Unfortunately for us, the Government will be in power for the next two years. Therefore, it is necessary that reforms take place immediately.

Mr. Baldry: What reforms?

Dr. McDonald: We need immediate reforms because without them there will be continual overspending——

Mr. Baldry *rose*——

Dr. McDonald: The hon. Gentleman cannot evade the issue. His Government are in power and his Government have reneged on their promises. They have abandoned any interest in reform, and their officials now seek only adjustments.

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Dr. McDonald: I shall not give way because I have done so several times already.

Without reform of the CAP, we cannot possibly contain farm prices. That will have immediate implications for the 1986 budget. When the Minister answered interventions from his hon. Friends earlier, he had nothing to say about the Commission's recent proposals for agricultural reforms, which are now on the table and which require a Government response. Those proposals will mean higher wheat prices, which will increase not only the cost of the CAP but cereal output, which in turn will add an enormous burden to the cost of the CAP.

That is another reason to believe that in 1986 budgetary discipline will not be obeyed. It is hard to envisage how the Commission can possibly contain farm prices in 1986. Not only has it abandoned any attempt to reduce cereal prices; its new policies are likely to increase them. Indeed, as one Brussels official said recently:

"We have had surpluses before but never so much. Next year it is hard to see just how the budget problems can be patched up."

The Government have received clear warnings from the Select Committee report of another place, from a Brussels official and from what the Commission is saying about its own price proposals, but they have chosen to ignore them. They prefer to pretend that they have budgetary discipline sewn up and that the 1986 budget will be contained within the 1·4 per cent. limit. It most certainly will not, and Ministers who have told the House that they cannot see how or why they should return to it to ask for more money will rue their words.

The Government will be back for more money next year. That is inevitable as they have not solved the problems of our contributions to the common agricultural policy, which means that our contributions to the EEC Community will overrun. Just as we have done in past years, we will end up spending more and paying more into the EEC.

6.22 pm

Sir Edward du Cann (Taunton): The House appreciated the clarity with which my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office introduced the debate. It admired his speech, as my hon. Friend is obviously a master of what is an extremely complicated subject. At the end of his speech and the beginning of the speech of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald), the House enjoyed a party political knockabout. If the hon. Lady does not mind my saying so, my hon. Friend won every round by a convincing points margin.

None of that—the compliments or the knockabout—can disguise the underlying feeling of the House, which is one of deep anxiety about the budget and the way in which it is being handled. I shall speak to the amendment in the names of many of my hon. Friends and I hope that the House will allow me a personal word to introduce my view.

This is the first speech that I have made in the Chamber on the European Community since the historic debate in October 1971 when the House voted by a majority of 112 to endorse Her Majesty's Government signature to the treaty of Rome. I said then that the decision was a profound mistake. I respected and greatly admired the idealism of the founding fathers of the European Community. After the holocaust of six years of war in which some of us had been engaged the dream of a splendid phoenix of unity arising from the bitterness and misery of the years before 1945 was attractive. I could understand that, but I could not see that political union with our neighbours—that was the ambition—was the true destiny of the United Kingdom. All our history told me otherwise. Flexibility has been our consistent keynote; the ability to make alliances as it suited us and to our advantage at the time, or defensively to combine against a dominant power or a tyrant.

I did not wish to allow our country effectively to sign a blank political cheque. I was sure also that there were alternatives in economic terms. I was certain that in a changing world it was right for us to maintain flexibility. In observing, for example, the economic explosion in the Pacific basin while our neighbours in Europe decline in competence and inventiveness, I feel once more that we have been making the wrong alliances.

I find it unbearable that we have abandoned our proven friends in the old dominions and in the old colonies of whose loyalty and shared history we were so poignantly reminded last Sunday in the ceremony at the Cenotaph. I have seen no reason to change my mind in any way or degree since.

The House voted in favour of the proposals in 1971 and again in 1975, and the country supported them in a referendum on 15 June 1975. As a democrat, I believed then and I believe now that those decisions should be accepted happily and willingly and that we must make the best of the situation in which we find ourselves. My deep worry is that that is exactly what we are not doing. That is the concern of many of us inside the House and of many others outside it.

We all know that the European Comunity, the bureaucracy at Brussels, is hardly popular in our country and is not well understood. Indeed, one might say that it is very much misunderstood. If our membership of the Community is to endure, it is essential that the wholehearted consent and enthusiasm of the British people is maintained or, at any rate, recovered instead of the current grudging tolerance. The alternative will be growing cynicism and ennui, and eventually the anti-Common

[Sir Edward du Cann]

Market pressures may become too strong to resist. That is the route that we are travelling along, not simply the one that we may travel if we are not careful.

How can we check the trend and reverse it? Checking it and attempting to reverse it is the duty and obligation of us all.

Mr. Dykes: My right hon. Friend is making some important remarks and all of us are listening to him with great care, especially in view of the constructive spirit which lies behind his contribution. I understand that my right hon. Friend has recently taken over the chair of the Conservative European Reform Group and there is some anxiety among Conservative members that many members of the group would prefer to see Britain leave the Community. Bearing in mind what he has said with great clarity about wishing, happily, to improve public acceptance of our membership of the Community, will he explain, in great detail, how we should enhance enthusiasm in Britain for the Community, which will mean inevitably much greater co-operation with the other member states, all of which seem to share much greater enthusiasm than Britain for various aspects of Community development?

Sir Edward du Cann: In effect, I am coming to that. I must correct my hon. Friend on one ground. I am grateful to him for what he has said, but I am the president of the Conservative European Reform Group and not its chairman. I am happy to be associated with it. The factors which have impressed me more than anything else in the group's discussions have been the good will, the integrity of view and the constructive atmosphere——

Mr. Soames: Unbelievable.

Sir Edward du Cann: I have the advantage of being present at the group's meetings and I know what I am talking about.

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Ian Gow): For the edification of the House, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the group of which he is the president has no connection with the Tory Reform Group, of which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy, I understand, is the president?

Sir Edward du Cann: The Secretary of State for Energy is a friend of mine and we have been political campaigners together for over 30 years, but any other resemblance is purely coincidental.

The budget that is before us is the key to reform. It is an old truth that whoever controls the cash has the power. An old friend of mine used to say that cash is king. It is entirely right that the House should consider grievances before Supply is voted.

When this debate was announced, like other hon. Members — not least the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), who made a great demonstration earlier — I went to the Vote Office and asked for the relevant papers. I was given a great mass of documents. I do not know whether every right hon. and hon. Member has been through them with great attention——

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): With a toothcomb.

Sir Edward du Cann: I am glad that some of my exceptional hon. Friends have been through the papers with a toothcomb. I went to the post office and asked the staff to weigh the papers. They weighed 2½ kilos, or, to put it in English, 5½lb. They deal with nine subjects and have 18 sections.

In the almost 30 years that I have been proud to be a Member of the House, I have never seen such an untidy bundle of papers. Worse still, they are undigested, in spite of the devoted efforts of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) rightly paid tribute. The hon. Gentleman is the Chairman of the Select Committee that examines European documents. However, the Committee has not given us any detailed observations or recommendations on the papers. That is not the fault of the hon. Gentleman or of his colleagues. So far this year they have had to deal with more than 1,000 European directives.

Would it not be for the convenience of us all if budgetary matters were surveyed by a special Select Committee on a continuous basis and not only as an inquest but as a contemporary affair and perhaps even looking ahead a little? My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) asked for constructive suggestions. If we are to get together to make sense of what we are trying to do in Europe, we should look seriously at the way in which the cash is being spent. Here we are, with this untidy bundle of undigested papers. What is worse, with the single exception of the paper presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), which, as one would expect from him, is a model of clarity, they are all out of date. They are not even relevant to what we are supposed to be discussing.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman and to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) for their remarks, but I should explain that the Select Committee on European Legislation, of which I have the privilege to be the Chairman, has an adequate staff of Officers of the House to assist the Committee tremendously. The reports that we have submitted to the House for the debate describe the scope and impact of each of the many documents that we have recommended. They stretch back over two years for the reasons that the right hon. Gentleman mentioned, but each document is of an entirely different and separate colour and therefore our job has been to describe them. I hope that if hon. Gentlemen read the reports, they will at least get a basis from which they could understand the larger documents.

Sir Edward du Cann: The work that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues do is deeply appreciated by us all. However, I do not think that it has the right terms of reference to handle adequately this huge volume of work, which needs much more detailed attention than the Select Committee is able to give to it, in the light of all the work that it has to do.

I would go further. I regard it as an insult to put before the House of Commons — and as we are the people's elected representatives, that means before the British people — such an ill-prepared set of proposals that we are powerless to affect. I dislike intensely, and will always criticise and object to, suggestions that we should approve on the nod the expenditure of vast sums of money without proper examination and consideration. There is a clear

principle, on which we have a duty to insist, that we shall never sanction expenditure without having properly examined it in advance.

The House of Commons is asked to note these papers, which I think we would all be prepared to do. However, our amendment suggests that Her Majesty's Government should note the view of the House of Commons that the proposal is a breach of parliamentary convention. Considerable sums of money are involved—about £20 billion. Like the hon. Member for Thurrock, I do not believe the forecast figure, I do not have any faith in it, and I am sure that the outturn will be different.

It is wrong to ask the House of Commons to agree—that is, to note—these proposals for heavy open-ended expenditure of uncertain sums, for several reasons. First, it is wrong when there are cuts in our domestic budgets and so many deserving candidates for expenditure. Secondly, it is wrong when, as it seems to me as an observer of the scene, there is little obvious effort in the European Community to control waste or extravagance. There is the Court of Auditors, but its recommendations are rarely taken seriously or followed up. It is a duty for those who are elected to follow public money wherever it goes. The European Assembly should take that duty more seriously.

Thirdly, it is wrong when so much expenditure goes on items that domestic Governments can perfectly well handle themselves—for instance, regional policy. There is no more expensive industry from the taxpayers' point of view than the transfer industry. Just as we should do our utmost at home to limit it, we should do the same in Europe.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): As another member of the Select Committee, I was somewhat concerned when I noticed in the document given to me by Oxfam details about the costs of surpluses of grain and other things. It claims that the cost of disposing of surplus grain came to as much as £6·2 billion, and that that is as much as 40 per cent. of the entire budget. I regard this matter with some disquiet. Will my right hon. Friend have an opportunity to consider it?

Sir Edward du Cann: I shall say something on that subject in a moment.

Fourthly, it is wrong to ask the House of Commons to agree to these proposals when the system for deciding expenditure is so patently absurd. The Commission decides, Ministers horse-trade and amend, the European Assembly tinkers ill-humouredly—as my hon. Friend the Member for Pentlands rightly reminded us, that is exactly what it is doing at the moment—and so it goes on. Each one contributes his ha'pennyworth or proposes millions of extra expenditure. The three estates of the European Community should be working together rather than working in persistent, unproductive conflicts. We must end this—it cannot go on in the way that it is.

Fifthly, it is wrong, as the hon. Member for Thurrock said, to cut aid to Third world countries. Many of us will have received in the post this morning a memorandum from Barclays bank showing that commodity prices in the developing countries in the first nine months of the year have fallen by as much as 15 per cent. Any cut in aid to the Third world at this time is as immoral as it is obscene.

Sixthly it is wrong, to come to the wise point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), that the common agricultural policy takes 70 per cent. of the total budget, there is over-production, and £100 million a week is being spent on storage, destruction and dumping of food supplies — that is mismanagement on an astounding scale. It must be a matter of profound anxiety, if not anger, to us all that it continues. I represent an agricultural constituency and I am particularly bothered by the effect that this is having on British agriculture. It is giving British agriculture generally a thoroughly bad name, which is unfortunate and unfair.

Seventhly, it is wrong that so much of this heavy, open-ended expenditure goes to support this nation's enemies. I refer to the sale of food at cheap prices, which is a way of bolstering the Communist system. That should be anathema to the free world and everything for which the European Community politically should stand. One could make a longer list of objections.

Mr. Dykes: How does my right hon. Friend react to the fact that New Zealand sells far more butter to the Soviet Union than the European Community does?

Sir Edward du Cann: The two things are entirely different. I would most happily give my hon. Friend a private lecture on the subject, but I must come to a conclusion.

The purpose of this debate is to allow grievance before Supply. It is right that all hon. Members should do their utmost to say to my hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues, "Before you come again to us with proposals of this sort — we all understand the difficulties and sympathise with them — let us see if we can make a move towards reform, because it is needed." We cannot leave the position unremarked and without proposals for improvement.

What should we seek most? The House of Lords Select Committee put it well when it warned us that many of the problems with which the Communities grappled would return again all too soon, that solutions of a sort had to be found, that considerable anxiety remained and that there must be vigorous thought about future development. That is exactly what we need.

I have a list of suggestions. First, let us postpone any grandiose ideals for political unity. The arguments about that subject are sterile and divisive. Let us concentrate on the practical things that we could and should be doing together—for example, on free trade. Let us ensure that that means entry not only into the United Kingdom, but into other countries on a reciprocal basis. Many restrictions — for example, shipping and financial restrictions—act against the United Kingdom. Let us set up a programme with objectives and make deadlines for their accomplishment.

Second, let us reinforce the capacity of EC industry to compete. From co-operation in practical ways, unity of purpose may come in future. If people get used to working together and see benefits from it, other unities will follow. But at this moment we are not travelling in that direction. To achieve practical arrangements for working together, rather than permitting and from perpetuating arguments and conflicts which are inimical to progress, it seems to me that we perhaps cannot afford a Brussels bureaucracy on its present scale, nor a peripatetic self-important European Parliament. To justify their existence, both will make more work, and will spend more money. The Government, whom I and all Conservative Members are proud to support, abolished 700 quangos and made a

[Sir Edward du Cann]

bonfire of controls. The whole House applauded that, and we should attempt it in Europe. Who misses the controls when they go? No one, except the practitioners of Parkinson's law.

I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to press hard for reform of the structure of the European Community. Because of our lack of clear-mindedness and determination, the idealism of the founding fathers of the EC is being frustrated. I hope with all my heart that we shall make a success of this great adventure. That is the purpose of the amendment, and to lead in that direction should be the purpose of the House. I hope that we reaffirm that determination in the debate today.

6.43 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): For a committed supporter of the Community the position is becoming increasingly depressing, although for reasons which differ profoundly from those which have just been enunciated by the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann). There are more and more blatant contradictions between what Governments declare to be their objectives and what they do at Council meetings. The Community is drifting further and further.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the internal market, which is presumably the basis of the budget. It certainly should be the area where the bulk of the money is generated. The Labour party may agree with me and as the right hon. Member for Taunton made clear, so also do intervention minimalists who are gathered poujadistically over the Conservative amendment.

If I may coin a phrase, they are,

"plus poujadiste que le Premier Ministre"——

and that's going some.

Mr. Marlow: Can the hon. Gentleman translate that please?

Sir Russell Johnston: I can certainly translate that, but the phrase,

"plus royaliste que le roi"

is fairly well known.

It is argued that more wealth will be generated by competition. Private enterprise will, therefore, be content, and Britain, because she is good at things like transport and financial services, will do well. In that way the nationalists in our midst will also be happy.

I made it clear earlier that I was not sure whether the Labour party would be happy. Probably because of my age I was not brought up to think of the Labour movement as being founded on private enterprise and nationalism. However, the Labour party amendment is in line with the approach of the Leader of the Opposition—a triumph of the short term over the medium term, with no glimpse of the long term. I shall return to that shortly.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Taunton that we need to extend the internal market; but how? It can be advanced only by decisions which set aside national preferences and protections. How is that to be done? As the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) is saying, it is to be done by majority decision making. It is utter nonsense to imagine that the 300 odd changes that are required can be achieved in any other way. All that it needs to stop them is for Monsieur Papandreou to say no in Greek 300 times and that will be the end of that.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: May we take it that the Liberal party agrees with the present position shown in the budget, whereby the so-called limits on agricultural spending can be increased by any amount in any year by a majority of member states voting for it? Does the Liberal party think that that is a good and sensible way to use majority voting?

Sir Russell Johnston: I am not dodging the hon. Gentleman's question when I——

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman usually does.

Sir Russell Johnston: No, I do not. I am about to deal specifically and directly with that point. If the hon. Gentleman will be a little patient, he will have an answer and I shall mention him with great pleasure.

I was referring to the fact that the Government, in their response to Dooge and their umpteen statements, refuse to accept that we require a reform of the decision-making process. That is a classic case of willing the end and denying the means.

I turn to the veto, which brings me to the hon. Gentleman's question. The veto is marvellous. I often think that if it could be given tangible form it would assuredly be carried aloft to the Conservative and Labour party conferences in a golden casket, perhaps, in the instance of the Conservative party conference, by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) in a suit of armour. That would be an enormously pleasing idea.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman is undoubtedly fully acquainted with the proposals of the European Parliament in relation to majority voting and an increase in its powers. Will he take his point a step further and, with regard to the revision of the treaties under article 236, agree that the European Parliament's consent should also be required? We seem to be moving down a rather dangerous path.

Sir Russell Johnston: I will come to that point, which is related to the point made by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). The Liberal and alliance view accords with that of the Dooge committee, which is essentially a cautious but clear recommendation that we move away from the veto. That is realistic.

However perhaps I may be allowed—rather like the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) or the Secretary of State for Energy—a personal comment on this. The more I think about this question the more it seems to me that the veto is not simply a useless shibboleth but a negative factor impeding the evolution of the Community and our capacity as a country and an economy to evolve, expand and develop within it.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He is always very courteous in these debates, although we seldom agree. Presuming that we did away with the veto, that would mean that directives could be introduced in Brussels which would be totally contrary to what the United Kingdom Government would wish to have in place. When that happened, the Government would have to put through this House measures which it not only did not believe in, but which it profoundly disagreed with. If they were a Conservative Government they might feel that these proposals would move this country towards Socialism, and if they were a Labour Government they might feel that they would move this country towards laissez faire or whatever. Is this not a terrible situation?

Sir Russell Johnston: Yes, indeed. The House continually passes legislation of which I do not approve.

I suspect that the Government introduce legislation from time to time of which many Conservative Members do not approve. Many of them seem to manage to operate within the structure, none the less.

Mr. Dykes: Is it not astonishing that the anti-marketeers on both sides of the House, as far as I know —I stand corrected if I am wrong—have not raised a peep about the fact that the Comptroller and Auditor General has refused to certificate £4 billion erroneously spent by the DHSS? Why are they not concerned about this or about the £20 billion dole money for the unemployed, yet they go into severe and astonishingly fanatical scrutiny of the tiny amounts of European expenditure that are designed to create a genuine community?

Sir Russell Johnston: That is a very good point. I must confess that, when the right hon. Member for Taunton was speaking, the thought crossed my mind that we are always sanctioning expenditure of large amounts of money without adequate scrutiny. It goes on all the time.

If the budget is to be controlled and used creatively, we need not only CAP reform and budget discipline but majority voting to allow effective and mutually beneficial common activities, not only in regional and social policy but in such things as technology. Collectively, the Community spends far more on research and development than does Japan, but for all the fine phrases about potential we cannot get our act together. The United Kingdom, for example, says that it is keen on EUREKA and is hosting a meeting on EUREKA, but it refuses to see any public money given to it.

North and south have been dealt with by Front Bench spokesmen. Politicians are endlessly talking about the need, the moral imperative and "God bless Bob Geldof". But the budget Councils will not will the means. Thus we get enormous public disaffection and, as the right hon. Member for Taunton rightly points out, ignorance.

The Labour party amendment states that it deplores a cut of 6 per cent. in real terms for food aid. I agree with that, but I do not agree with the context in which it is placed in the amendment. When the Labour party was in government, it also failed to respond generously in the Council of Europe and to suggest, as is done in the *Star* —I do not know how many hon. Members read the *Star* regularly——

Mr. Foulkes: The *Morning Star?*

Sir Russell Johnston: No, the *Daily Star*—the star without any morning. It has a heading which says, "Obscene scandal", which I am sure many readers would be disappointed to discover is about the common agricultural policy.

The *Daily Star* implies that all that is required to solve the problems of the Third world is to ship out our surpluses, which is complete nonsense. Much more to the point, as the right hon. Member for Taunton said, we should ask why we wish to renegotiate the Lomé 2 agreement on sugar so as to reduce sugar cane imports and to make way for Community sugar beet. Most hon. Members would agree that trade is the best form of aid. If we are serious about helping ACP countries, or at least the Caribbean, the best way to do so is to take their sugar and not to grow more of our own.

The hon. Member for Thurrock mentioned the accession of Spain and Portugal. I have said many times during such debates that if we encourage the accession of Spain and Portugal, which we have—indeed, it was mentioned in almost the first line of the Gracious Speech —and we do so primarily for political reasons, it will fail, or at least cause us a great deal of trouble, if it is not matched by some economic generosity. There is no proper provision in the budget for accession. I visited Lisbon last week. Portugal imports about 60 per cent. of its agricultural needs. It is the poorest country in Europe. The new Social Democratic Government are worried that Portugal will become a net contributor to the European budget, which would be scandalous.

That is a good point at which to turn to the poujadist amendment, which deplores further increases in the public expenditure of the European Community. Indeed, so far as I can see, those who tabled it remain to be convinced that any expenditure—or at least the present amount of expenditure—by the EC is necessary. That view is unacceptable because it ignores the political factor. The political factor is that it is unacceptable to the weaker members of the Community to be exploited by its stronger members. That is also in complete contradiction to the philosophy of the founding fathers, which was mentioned by the right hon. Member for Taunton. They had in mind redistribution and wealth transfer. If we want a better internal market, as I and many hon. Members do, we must accept that if it is advantageous to us, we must pay for it by helping the poorer countries, which makes them stronger economies and better markets for us. If self-interest is the only motivating factor, it should be remembered that, in the end, Marshall aid repaid the United States many times over.

The kindest thing that can be said about the Labour party's amendment is that it is a masterpiece of casuistry. It strings together the desirable and the deceiving in a most simplistic way. First, it mentions the common agricultural policy. If the Labour party can produce a miraculous new CAP which will reduce farm spending enormously at a stroke, without complete rural chaos, increased unemployment and gravely disrupted food supplies, let us hear it. We all want to hear it. In effect, that is what the Minister was saying not very long ago.

Mr. Baldry: What is the policy of the Liberal party and, if it is different, of the Social Democratic party on reforming the common agricultural policy? Is it one of quotas, or control through prices or control through taking land out of production? We should be interested to know.

Sir Russell Johnston: It is a combination of quota and prices, which will result in some land coming out of production. But I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not expect me to produce an absolute solution, which would be impossible. Since there is no absolute solution, we must make the changes slowly. It is impossible to stop an express train suddenly.

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Gentleman is eloquent in his criticism of the Government motion, the poujadiste amendment and the Labour party amendment. Representing as he does the supposed great third force in British politics, can he say why the alliance was unable to put down an amendment?

Sir Russell Johnston: We thought it appropriate to vote for the Government's statement on the Order Paper.

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Russell Johnston: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a minute.

The Labour party must deal with a contradiction. Yesterday we had Scottish questions. Hon. Members may say, "What have Scottish questions got to do with this?" The answer is that they were questions about the need for a package of aid for farmers in Scotland. This is also a problem for farmers in England, but it was mainly Scotland that we were talking about yesterday. What were Labour Members saying? They were saying that action must be taken as soon as possible. They did not say, by the way, that our Government spend £300 million a year on agriculture in Scotland. They spend that every year, come hail, rain or shine. Opposition Members did not say, "We want to cut that, so let us cut it and not give them any extra aid at all." Although they did not say that, that is the logic of the position if they were suddenly to slash the CAP, and they ought to face up to that.

Mr. Foulkes: That is not the logic of our position. Opposition and Government Members have said that a huge amount of CAP money is spent on storing and destroying surpluses. If the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) had read the report of the House of Lords Select Committee, the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General, and the other reports on the CAP, he would know that they all say that the money is not going to those who really need it, farmers in the marginal areas. Those are the people that hon. Members on both sides were asking questions about and seeking assistance for during Scottish questions yesterday.

Sir Russell Johnston: I agree with the hon. Gentleman to an extent. There is a large degree of misspending on the common agricultural policy and I have not contended otherwise. The point I am making is that it is wrong to seek to convey, as I am afraid his party does, that one can sweep away much of the cost of the CAP without any pain. That is not true.

I am also weary of people continually telling us about the destruction of food. That is bad, but it did not start with the Common market. We were destroying potatoes in this country before we ever went into the EEC. It is because of the flexibility of the harvest of certain things. If hon. Gentlemen who are always talking about this go to Tesco at the end of the week, they will see how many vegetables are thrown away, and that will be an interesting experience for them.

Mr. Marlow: In my constituency, we have a great deal of trouble trying to pin down members of the Liberal party to a particular policy. The hon. Gentleman has been very helpful, because he has told us about his policies. He has also told us that the Liberal party is four-square behind the Government's proposals. So that we may know in advance, will the hon. Gentleman tell the House how many members of the Liberal party and how many of his collaborators in the SDP will go through the Lobby this evening in support of the Government's motion?

Sir Russell Johnston: I am not the Whip for the Liberal party and I have not the faintest idea. I will return to the matter in hand.

Reform of the CAP also means institutional reform, or we will get such nonsense as the German veto on grain prices. It is not true to say that one can cut farm support painlessly. The suggestion in the amendment is that one can do that and that will enable one to spend more money on regional and social funds and to solve the problems of accession, presumably of Greece. It will not.

The 1986 budget is a prisoner of past failure to face reality and of future self-deception. It is not, as some hon. Members have said, and as the *Daily Star* says, because of what it describes as

"the faceless spendthrifts of Brussels."

It is the fault of the Community Ministers and, in particular, of the Ministers of Agriculture, and that most certainly includes our Minister of Agriculture. The so-called Eurocrats, the so-called faceless men, have continually warned the Council of Ministers about this. It is the party politicians in government who have failed to respond, like our Minister of Agriculture, who told dairy farmers only months before dairy quotas were slapped on, that they should produce and produce. That is the sort of thing that has caused the present situation. It is the party politicians who have reached different conclusions in functional Councils from the budget Councils later on. Our Government share the blame and in some respects take the blame for the failure of the Community to make the advances we hoped for and still believe possible.

The Minister said—I know I quote him correctly, because I took it down—that "we have a protection not available to any other member state." The British compensation mechanism corrected injustices, but it failed to base the correction of those injustices on any general principles or concepts of fairness. That affects Portugal and has also encouraged the other countries, noticeably the Germans, to adopt the attitude of juste retour. If that persists, it will exclude the wealth transfer and redistribution of wealth which is a fundamental part of the concept of the Community and without which the Community will not work but will revert to protectionism and nationalism. If we hope to solve our political, social and economic problems, those attitudes must be changed.

7.6 pm

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): I start by welcoming my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) to the via crucis of these European debates. He certainly raised the level of the argument, but I do not propose to follow extensively what he said. It seems to me that the root fallacy in his remarks lay in his attempt to take the historic principle upon which the power of this House has been founded—the principle that "the redress of grievances should precede Supply"—and apply it to the European Community budget. The reality of the situation is otherwise: the sense in which the House can be said to vote Supply for the Community's "own resources" is essentially myth and that myth is reflected in the kind of papers of which my right hon. Friend complains and the way in which they are presented. That is the reality of the situation. Some hon. Members may regret it, and some may not. I am sure that my right hon. Friend regrets it, and so do I—in a nostalgic sort of way.

This debate is taking place on the eve of the most important event in the Community since the first enlargement when we, the Danes and the Irish joined in 1973. This is the second and probably the final enlargement of the European Community, to include Spain and Portugal. So it is an occasion on which we should take stock of what is one of the most fundamental institutions of the Community; an institution which, from

the beginning, has been of crucial importance to Britain and will be of first-class importance to Spain and Portugal. That institution is the European budget.

What sort of institution is it? Where is it heading, and, if I may put it this way, what is the right philosophy for the European budget? There exist two different concepts of the European budget, and both are embodied in the texts before us. The texts contain two quite distinct and opposite tendencies, and it is around those different tendencies that the European budget will develop in future.

One concept of the European budget is that it is quite simply the financial dimension of the Common Market. The argument runs as follows—and I commend it to my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton, because it should show him why his ideas for structural reform are essentially and fundamentally unrealistic. A common market requires a common external tariff. That tariff generates revenues which cannot simply be divided among the member states because of the entrepot effects: the fact for instance that trade goes through Rotterdam and the taxes on it are collected by the Dutch, even though the destination of the goods may be Dusseldorf in Germany.

So the revenues from the common external tariff cannot merely be divided among member states: they have to be pooled.

Furthermore, a common market requires a common agricultural policy, in order to ensure that free trade in goods and services is complemented by free trade in agricultural products. True, the nature of Europe's common agricultural policy could be different, but the form of agricultural policy that has been adopted in the Community is one that involves a uniform, transnational system of intervention, and in practical terms such a system cannot be operated separately by the member states. This is why the expenditures that support that agricultural policy have to be commonly financed.

If one adds to those considerations the fact that a common market arguably requires a harmonised basis of indirect taxation—such as we have in the Community in the form of VAT — one has identified all the key elements in the concept of the European budget as the more fiscal expression of the Common Market. It is a budget financed by common external duties—tariffs and levies — and disbursed primarily on the market intervention system of the common agricultural policy. That is, in essence, the budget that we have before us today, in which 72 per cent. of expenditure is intended for the CAP. This is a budget whose structure is fundamentally unstable.

Because of the problem of the United Kingdom contribution, we have the new mechanism for abatement, which will have to be renegotiated when we reach the end of the new tranche of own resources. That will be necessary also because of the Portuguese, whose problem is that they traditionally import most of their food from outside the European Community — imports on which they will have to pay substantial levies. After the transitional period, it is unlikely that the volume of receipts that they will get from the Community to support their own agriculture and other policies will compensate for those levies.

I turn now to the other concept of the budget, which sees it as the financial dimension, not just of the Common Market, but of an increasingly integrated European economy. On that philosophy, the European budget should not just reflect the progress of European economic integration, but should help to promote that progress. There are many different elements in this concept. From the very beginning it was recognised that the opening up of the trading opportunities that the Common Market provided would create adjustment problems for the industries of member states. That is why the European social fund was provided in the founding Treaty of Rome to help workers in various industries to adapt to changes in the market.

Beyond that limited concept, as the Common Market countries trade more and more with one another—we need only look at the trade figures to see the trade acceleration which continues to take place—and as the economic inter-penetration of the real economies of the member states deepens inevitably the purely national instruments of economic policy-making become less and less effective. In the Treasuries they pull the wires and press the old buttons, but the familiar effects do not occur, because essentially that machinery has lost control of the real economy underneath.

That is why the Community needs to develop the instruments of a joint and collective European economic policy, because that is the only route by which we can recover the lost political sovereignty over the economy which economic progress has taken away. Of course, this is largely a matter of the co-ordination of distinct national fiscal and monetary policies, but it is a question also of structural policies—of structural economic reforms—in the steel, coal and other industries. These reforms cost money and they can be and are being partially and even wholly financed from the European budget.

Moreover, in the long run the stable working of an increasingly integrated Common Market requires a stable system of internal exchange rates. An increasingly integrated economic community brings benefits to the exporting regions in the Common Market. From the political point of view, and from the point of view of equity and justice, the acceptance of constraints on the management of exchange rates requires that we should develop a system of support for those who do not benefit — those in the importing regions in the Common Market, who will no longer be able to operate a strategy of exchange rate depreciations.

The history of national economic integration displays great economic gains for the economic unit as a whole, but the tendency is for those gains to be concentrated in the most dynamic areas. That is why every national economy has developed off-setting devices, both private and public, whether by the flow of dividend income from economic growth to the less well-off parts of the country, or by way of public sector transfers in the shape of social benefits or regional policies. In this way, the increasingly integrated European economy is following exactly the same historical road as the national economies followed during the process of national economic integration in the 19th and early 20th centuries. That road is marked on one side by economic integration, and on the other by the systematic growth of resource transfers organised through the state budget.

Some colleagues may feel that the application of that piece of history to Europe is rather far-fetched, but this is in fact what is happening in the Community. The logic and the linkages which I have described are already reflected in this European budget. For example, the links between economic co-ordination, industrial restructuring, exchange rate stabilisation and resource transfers can be seen

[Mr. Robert Jackson]

in the decision in 1974 to create the European regional development fund, at the same time as the decisions about economic convergence and about the currency "snake". They can also be seen in the resource transfer commitments which are embodied in the agreement establishing the European monetary system. In other words, the European budget embodies two different philosophies, two different concepts of European integration, and two different tendencies for its future development.

What about that future? Since 1979 the Government have focused overwhelmingly on the single problem of the inequitable consequences for Britain of the operation of the first of those two philosophies — that limited philosophy which confines the budget simply to the role of financing the Common Market. That argument has now been resolved, I hope permanently, after a great deal of painful negotiation, by the simple device of establishing a mechanism to set a limit on the size of Britain's net contribution. We should congratulate the Government on the first year of the operation of that mechanism, which is embodied in these budget documents, but there is nevertheless a flaw in our position. This is not just the question of the possible eventual renegotiation of this arrangement when we exhaust the present 1·4 per cent. ceiling. There is a more fundamental flaw: from the position of privilege which we have acquired for ourselves, there is a danger that we in Britain will look with some indifference on the much wider and more fundamental debate about the future of the European budget. We may even look with indifference on something remarkable in these documents which has not yet been pointed out — the fact that Britain has now lost her favourable net position in every European Community fund, after having had a favourable position in the European social fund, the regional fund and a variety of other funds ever since we joined. Of course, we can say, "This does not really matter because we will get it all back through the repayment abatement mechanism," but I hope that the Government will not make the mistake of falling into that indifference.

Those of us who follow the debates in the House about European affairs are well aware that there is a miasma, an atmosphere, of provisionality about so many of the Government's positions with regard to Europe. In spite of his incisiveness and all the dialectical efforts of the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), there is this atmosphere of provisionality.

One day my hon. Friend the Member for Pentlands, my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury come to the Dispatch Box adamant that there will never be any increase in the Community's own resources, yet on the next day, a Bill to increase those own resources is being put through Parliament. One moment they are at the Dispatch Box adamant that there will never be any amendments to the treaties, but I expect that we shall see a Bill to amend those treaties. One day they are adamant that exchange rate management is undesirable and, in any case, impossible, but the next the Chancellor is making a speech saying that exchange rate targeting is now the centrepiece of the Government's economic strategy.

I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) to his new responsibility for the European budget. There is a peculiar personal piquancy, which I know he appreciates, about his new position. I do not expect him to acknowledge this weakness in the foundations of Britain's European policy. He is a clever man, and I am sure that he can find a logical justification for every position that we have adopted at each particular moment. All that I propose is that he and his colleagues, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton, should ask themselves inwardly: why is Britain's position in the debates on the future of Europe — that Europe with which we are so intimately concerned—so often built on shifting sands?

My answer is that we are always fighting yesterday's battles, and I regret to say that that was a feature of the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton. I do not believe that we in Britain have yet thought deeply or seriously enough about what the European Community really is — an entity which is defined not just by the policy of Britain but by the policy of 10 or 12 other countries. Nor have we yet thought seriously enough about the logic of the development of the Community from its prime foundations, which were laid in our absence because of our earlier negligence. Nor yet do we really know which trends in the Community we should foster and encourage, which we should resist and oppose, and, perhaps above all, which trends are inevitable and which it would be foolish to waste time in opposing.

It is in this last category, in spite of the adverse trends that we see in the budget papers for 1985 and 1986, that I place the inexorable tendency of the European Community to develop both as a reflection, and as one of the mainsprings of, an increasingly integrated European economic policy. The second enlargement of the Community with the entry of Spain and Portugal will strain that concept more than it has been strained by our own presence, that in the long run that enlargement will make the development of the Community budget in this direction even more necessary and inevitable.

7.22 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) spoke of what he believes to be a necessity. He also referred to what he thought was a fact. I think he said that the control by the House over its EC funds was mythical—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Wantage nods assent.

That was in stark contrast to the historic quotation by the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) about grievances before supply, because, unless there is an opportunity to discuss the grievances before the supply of EC cash, there is no redress for those grievances. If the hon. Member for Wantage is right, there can be no redress for our grievances.

Mr. Jackson: Perhaps other mechanisms and institutions coming into existence—derided, I am afraid to say, by my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann)—will have to perform this function.

Mr. Spearing: That may be so, and I may touch on that shortly, without, I hope, being too controversial. I did say "by the House", and that was the purpose of my remarks to the hon. Member for Wantage, who said that the powers were mythical.

I agree strongly with the hon. Member for Wantage in respect of the accession of Portugal. There are similarities between Portugal and Britain over their position in the EEC. Portugal is divided on the merits of joining the EEC. In the next year or so there could be some internal dissent in that country, and there may be an attempt to re-negotiate its particular treaty.

The right hon. Member for Taunton, in a notable speech, described the hesitations that he and many others had in 1971 about the then Government's White Paper. At that time many people had constitutional question marks in their minds, but many were also convinced by the White Paper's forecast that the benefits to Britain's manufacturing industry would be great. That White Paper also said that, although those manufacturing advantages could not be quantified, they would be positive and substantial. Substantial they may have been, but, alas, they have been negative in terms of our manufacturing industry. I am sure that with that qualification the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) will agree that I am correct.

The right hon. Member for Taunton also expressed the hope that the institutions of the EEC would provide stability and give some coherence to an apparently disordered picture. In 1971, others spoke of the inherent instability of the triangular structure of the constitution. Time alone will tell—even after 10 years—which of those two views is right. Those who doubted the promises about manufacturing also had doubts about the constitution. Perhaps they will be proved right.

I wish to speak on five subjects — the surfeit of documents, the surplus of agricultural products, the Strasbourg Assembly, Spain and sugar.

Reference has already been made to the number of documents before us. That is not only the responsibility of the Government or of the Select Committee on European Legislation. It is our duty to report to the House those measures of legal and political importance that the House should consider.

We are tonight trying to do two jobs at the same time —to clear up the outstanding matters in the 1985 budget and to look ahead to 1986. That has been the choice of the Government. There has been dissent about the wisdom of taking those two issues together. The fact that before us we have a document from the EEC, a memorandum from the Government and a report from the Select Committee means that we are considering three times as many documents as we otherwise would. I suggest that the memorandum from the Government and the paragraphs in the Select Committee report give hon. Members the best clue as to what these documents are about.

There is clearly great unease about the complexity of the picture. It may be that that, together with our procedures, has led to the myth to which the hon. Member for Wantage referred in respect of our powers.

It is clear that the number of people able to claim knowledge of these matters is decreasing. It appears to me that the EEC financial structures are becoming ever more complicated year after year. One must almost grow up with how they have developed to understand them. Each piece of machinery has its own internal balances, and one must understand each part before understanding the whole. Given some of the phrases that have been bandied about today, I appreciate why lay persons might have extreme difficulty understanding the debate. That difficulty, even for Members of Parliament, may contribute to the lack of control to which the hon. Member for Wantage has already referred.

Mr. Dykes: Would the hon. Gentleman be as pleased with this process of intensive searchlight scrutiny of the EEC budget if hon. Members examined the British Budget with as much care and attention? The EEC budget totals only £20 billion, with a £1 billion contribution from the United Kingdom, whereas the United Kingdom Budget totals £140 billion.

Mr. Spearing: I am not quite sure that I follow the hon. Gentleman's point because, as he will know, we now have a series of Select Committees, each of which shadows, as it were, one of the great Departments of State. Although he may not be aware of it, the House has given terms of reference to each of those Select Committees to examine annually the Estimates of the respective Departments—indeed, not only to look at the annual Estimates, but to examine the Supplementaries, winter and spring, as well. It is therefore open to the members of those Select Committees to examine in a more intense manner the Budget and expenditure plans of our own Government than it is for us, indirectly, as it were, to examine the budget and expenditure plans of the European Community.

It is the figure of £3,000 million, our approximate annual contribution—it may be a little higher now—that we are approving tonight, and I do not think that we are able to give the intensity of scrutiny to that £3,000 million that a Select Committee can give to a similar budget of a similar Department. I put that to the hon. Gentleman for his consideration, because I note that we have the powers of scrutiny of a Select Committee in respect of the £3,000 million.

So much for the surfeit of paper. I turn now to the surpluses, because they are causing the problem in the budget. In its fifth report HC5 No. 30 of 23 October, the Scrutiny Committee spelt out the shape of the 1986 budget, and it is largely that to which I wish to refer. We are now facing annual commitments in the EEC budget of about £22,590 million. That is the figure in pounds which the Scrutiny Committee has calculated to be broadly the EEC budget. By any stretch of the imagination, that is a very large figure. We have also shown in our report that it is 23 per cent. greater than for 1985, so it is growing at a considerable speed. In our report, we say:

> "The Commission indicate that appropriations for expenditure entered in the Preliminary Draft Budget would require a uniform VAT Own Resources rate of 1·24 per cent."

That is 1·24 per cent. one year after the 1 per cent. limit has been changed. We know, of course, that it is more than half way to the 1·4 per cent. limit that we already have.

We go on in our report to say that the United Kingdom's share of the gross contributions to the 1986 budget is estimated by the Commission to be 5,382 mecu—about £3,344 million. I agree that the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), was lucid in his exposition, but it might be an improvement in the future if he were to give some figures in pounds or millions of pounds as well as in ecus, so that we might have some basis for comparison.

There is another aspect of the 1986 budget that I wish to mention and on which we reported to the House in our report on the EEC report, "1986 Community Budget: Key Figures". I quote from our report:

[Mr. Spearing]

"For the three structural funds, the reserves would serve the purpose of paying off previous commitments which have been fixed by the budgetary authority at a proportionately higher level than the payments envisaged for the years concerned."

It appears that in the 1986 budget we shall be asked to pay towards reserves which are not reserves at all but appear to be paying off commitments already made.

The report continues:

"The Commission points out that since 1978, approximately £6·3 billion of commitment appropriations have accumulated, of which . . . some £5 billion relate to the structural funds, and proposes that the increase in commitments in that area should be kept at 5 per cent."

I hope that the Minister of State, Treasury, perhaps in his winding-up remarks, will agree that that quotation from the Commission tends to suggest—indeed means—that there has been a piling up of commitments to member states for these structural funds—the regional fund, the social fund and possibly the agricultural guidance fund—which are to be paid but for which, as yet, no resources are available. Perhaps he can tell us whether or not national Governments have paid out any of that money and are awaiting these balances from the EEC. If so—I am glad that he should correct me if I am wrong—when we are looking at the 1986 budget, which is a bit of revenue, we ought also to bear in mind that there may be some capital debt overriding the whole which has still to be paid off.

Mr. Gow: Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman. When the Budget Council came to consider the draft budget, there were indeed large sums for the cost of the past. In respect of some of those items, the Budget Council asked for further information. It will be a matter for consideration in the time between now and the date when the budget for 1986 is actually finalised as to the extent to which, in the coming year, the cost of the past actually has to be met in 1986.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Minister for his intervention. It adds to the effect of the scrutiny which we all think necessary. My interpretation of what he said is that I may well be correct, and that all that remains now is for the Commission to find ways of getting round the problem. If that is so, it is indeed serious, because it means that, even by levying a 1·24 per cent. rate, there is still quite a lot of backlog money to be funded. The Minister nods assent. That means that the problem is as serious as I feared. We ought perhaps to be kept up to date on it. We are certainly grateful to the Commission for bringing this to our attention and also to the Minister for confirming it.

I now turn to a document which is on the Order Paper but which has not so far been referred to, except in passing by the Minister—document 8479/85 on food aid. The Scrutiny Committee recommended this for debate because it is a matter not only of food aid, but of transfer within headings of the budget. The Scrutiny Committee, in its 31st report, 1984-85 Session, said:

"In their Explanatory Memorandum, the Government explain that at present, the proportion of food aid expenditure corresponding to Community export refunds (representing the difference between the Community price and world price) is charged to the Guarantee Section of the EAGGF, while the remaining expenditure (representing the equivalent of the cost of the products on the world market) is charged to Title 9"—

the co-operation and development part—

"of the Budget. The proposed amendment would bring both elements of the expenditure together under Title 9."

In other words, this proposal from the Commission is that, in respect of food aid, which is now very much a hot topic, instead of the moneys coming partly from the CAP—which is, of course, responsible for the production of the surpluses—all the subsidy required for food aid shall come from the aid side of the budget and none from the agricultural. That is why, earlier in the debate, I interrupted the Minister. He said that this would be dealt with again by his hon. Friend the Minister of State Treasury. The Ministerial memo supplied to us, which is a public document dated 22 October and signed by the Minister of State Treasury, goes through this, but gives no indication of the Government's attitude. That is why I very much welcome what both Ministers are saying—that the Government are against this proposal, because, although the net expenditure within the EEC may be the same, it would seem quite wrong that the aid budget, as distinct from the agricultural budget, should bear all the burden of what is clearly an agricultural problem, and not just one of aid. The status quo is not perfect, but it is better than what the EEC proposes.

Perhaps the hon. Member for Harrow, East had Strasbourg in mind in his intervention. The long motion on the Order Paper is important constitutionally, and it is certainly novel. It contains the following words:

"the council's decisions on the European Parliament's amendments and proposed modifications to the New Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1985".

One of the many documents takes account of Strasbourg's requirements, so a motion is presented involving a change in expenditure proposed in Strasbourg which is to be decided by this House. That represents a new and important element in determining EEC expenditure. Strasbourg has powers, and it is part of the EEC constitution, so that element might grow.

This House has no part in the EEC's constitution, whereas the Strasbourg Assembly has. In the Scrutiny Committee's report that is spelt out. It states:

"The Letter of Amendment No. 3 to the Preliminary Draft Budget for 1985 is due to be considered by the Budget Council on 23 April. The Treasury comment, in their Explanatory Memorandum, that to the extent that the financing requirements as formally agreed exceed the Community's Own Resources, they will be provided for by an Inter-Governmental Agreement, United Kingdom payments requiring authorisation by Parliament."

The intergovernmental agreement in respect of that money, required not by Parliament but elsewhere, was dealt with by the House recently.

The amendment mentions the accession of Spain to the Community. Spain hopes to become a net beneficiary by 1986. I am not sure whether it will, because the money might not be available. I understand that in Spain representatives are worried that they might not receive all that they were told they would receive before they signed the treaty of accession. That would be serious for the Community financially and constitutionally.

Spain was anxious to join the Community. The Cortes was unanimous in its wish to apply for membership. There was not a single vote of either dissent or abstention. Spain will have a rude awakening if the money does not stretch as far as expected.

Another aspect of Spain's accession is that, when VAT is applied in Spain, it will replace many regional, local and national taxes.

To our delight the King of Spain is to visit Britain. That was mentioned in the Queen's Speech. Spain is a democratic country and it has a constitutional monarchy.

We welcome Spain back to that small group of nations with a combination of the old and the new. However, Spain is a relatively young democracy. Inside are strong centrifugal and strong centralising forces. A balance between the two is essential for democracy.

If what I have said is correct, and if the money-raising powers of Spain's regions are reduced as a result of accession, of having to pay centralised funds and of being subject to centralised VAT assessment, that could have an effect upon the internal balances of power and democracy in that country. I hope that it will not, but some of the EEC's financial requirements, which might appear logical, particularly to some Conservative Members, might have effects which are the reverse of our expectations. This might be the last debate on the subject before Spain's accession. It is therefore right to make that point, just as I referred to Portugal earlier.

We have talked about billions of pounds today. We have talked about surpluses, including sugar surpluses. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) will enlarge on that. I understand that there is a dispute between the EEC and the countries supplying cane sugar to the Community about next year's price.

We decided to maintain cane sugar imports into Britain because we had an obligation to our Commonwealth friends. That 1·4 million tonnes of cane sugar was agreed by resolution under a Labour Government—and it was not negotiated by the Conservative Government—but there was nothing in the agreement about price. It would be ironic and wrong if, while we were piling up enormous surpluses of beet sugar, that 1·4 million tonnes were to be reduced because of an unsatisfactory price. I hope that the Government intend to ensure that the ships delivering 25,000 tonnes each to Plaistow refinery will not be imperilled. I hope that the work and production of people in east London and of our friends in the Commonwealth will not be prejudiced by some niggardly attempts in Brussels to try to save the relatively small sum that our friends in the Commonwealth obtain for their labours. I declare an interest because the refinery at Silvertown in my constituency refines 1 million tonnes of cane sugar a year.

That last aspect of the Community budget illustrates not only the complexities but the enormous power wielded by the Council and the Commission in Brussels. Other powers might be taken in Strasbourg. It is up to the House to maintain the scrutiny through our Ministers in Brussels to ensure that we retain power over the enormous amounts which our taxpayers contribute to the EEC budget.

7.49 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is a declared critic of the European Community but on this subject, as on others, his contributions require to be heard with the greatest respect and attention. The House is grateful to him for the work that he does as Chairman of the Select Committee on European Legislation.

I am in a difficulty tonight. Like most hon. Members of sound mind, I know that Britain has no choice but to remain a member of the European Community. We have an inextricably linked double interest in making the Community and Britain as strong as possible.

The fact that I am an enthusiastic supporter of the European Community and of full British participation in it may arouse some of the Community's heated adversaries on both sides of the House. However, I propose to utter some sharp criticisms of the way in which the Community is working—in so far as that can be gleaned from the bulky documents before us.

I am a known supporter of the Community, so if I make even the most guarded criticism, it will be pounced on, distorted and quoted out of context by the anti-Europeans who monopolised the debate on Community finance on 22 October. Most of the rest of us were busy with our constituents who came on the mighty lobby to demand that the Government and the Community do more to prevent a recurrence of famine and want in the Third world.

It is understandable that some hon. Members should seek to give the press and the world a distorted impression of the views of the House, rather like the electors of Brecon and Radnor who amused themselves by giving deliberately misleading answers to the opinion pollsters. It is easy to mislead the press, which is always eager to berate hon. Members for non-attendance but whose presence in the Press Gallery today is, as usual, inconspicuous. Even if the press reporters were here to write a report, the editors would not print it. I wish that my hon. Friends the Members for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and the other hon. Members who want to stop the world and get off would stop pulling the communication cord, because it makes the rest of us feel rather sick.

It is conventional wisdom to denounce the common agricultural policy. It is absurd to continue subsidising farmers to produce commodities already in huge surplus and to subsidise their export which disrupts agricultural production in the Third world, provides cheap food for our enemies, or provides tardy, grudging and meagre short-term famine relief. Any effective reform of the CAP will hurt British farmers, many of whom are already hard-pressed.

It is easy for hon. Members who represent non-farming constituencies to advocate throwing British and continental farmers to the wolves. It is easy for those who want to get Britain out of the Community, at whatever cost, to argue that British farmers would be better supported through deficiency payments from the Exchequer even though evidence shows that that would be as costly as support through CAP.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Utter nonsense.

Sir Anthony Meyer: The figures show it. Those who cannot indulge in soft dreams of life outside the Community but who want to maintain a prosperous agriculture and who find the CAP increasingly difficult to justify have a more difficult task. Those who think as I do cannot brush aside the warning of my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins). He said that by agreeing to an increase to 1·4 per cent. of VAT we had surrendered a weapon that could have been used to force our Community partners to accept changes in the CAP. That argument is valid, but not conclusive.

To refuse the increase to 1·4 per cent., especially with the entrance of Spain and Portugal—their accession underpins parliamentary democracy in Europe and, therefore, far outweighs the economic cost of their entry—would have been akin to using the nuclear armoury that is credible as a deterrent but not as a weapon.

By spending so much of our stock of good will in securing a final settlement of our budget problem, we are

[Sir Anthony Meyer]

left with a sadly diminished stock of credit to negotiate changes in the common agricultural policy or any other necessary changes. Never mind, we must do what we d[illegible] Far more vital British interests are at stake than eve[illegible] permanent reduction in our budgetary contribution. Those are the bitter fruits of macho diplomacy, but it does not lie in the mouths of those who are pressing for ever more aggressive tactics to complain of the result.

I fear that the CAP will eventually perish under its own weight as one Government after another come to realise how much it is costing their other taxpayers to maintain their farmers in that way. We must realise that if the CAP collapses, without an acceptable replacement, not just British farmers and the countless other enterprises which depend upon them but our whole rural environment will be at risk.

The second argument of conventional wisdom is to say that the Community should spend more money on regional development. It worries me for a second time to earn some approval from the anti-Europeans, but I must confess to a growing uneasiness about the whole business of European regional development. It is not that I am against regional development — far from it. I believe strongly that Governments should use selective incentives and disincentives to steer jobs to areas of high unemployment, but I have three worries about European regional development.

The first is that the money provided by the Community is never, whatever Governments may say, a true net addition to the total development aid received by any region. In one way or another, Governments make correcting deductions from the money that they would otherwise have provided. Secondly, the provision of European money to finance local cherished schemes is, in some subtle way, politically corrupt. It is somehow less open to exposure than development aid given by national Governments, even when that aid is given for the most blatant electoral reasons.

My third objection to an increased regional aid programme is the most important. It brings me to the heart of what I want to say. The whole economic purpose of the Community is to enable its members, by virtue of their membership, to achieve more for the Community and themselves than they could achieve separately; that the whole should be greater and more effective than the sum of its parts. To use part of the Community budget to finance regional schemes which would otherwise have to be financed out of national budgets does not take us one inch further towards our objective of a Community that is greater than the sum of its parts.

There was spectacular progress towards that objective in the first 14 years of the Community's life. There has been no progress in the 14 years since Britain became a member. Post hoc or propter hoc? One of the biggest obstacles to the achievement of that objective is the failure to complete the Common Market because of the obstinate survival of non-tariff barriers to trade, especially non-visible trade. My right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) spoke of that eloquently but, I think, misleadingly.

Her Majesty's Government say that the completion of the Common Market is their No. 1 priority in the Community. They sent Lord Cockfield as Commissioner to Brussels with a remit to get that moving. Lord Cockfield turned out to be ten times as good as I thought he would be. I readily withdraw the adverse remarks that I made about him on his appointment.

At whom does Lord Cockfield point the accusing finger for his inability to make much headway in the job that he was sent to Brussels to do? Her Majesty's Government. It is not good enough for Ministers, especially my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, to say that we want to press on towards a single market so that we can meet the Japanese and American challenge, but that we cannot possibly drop any of our customs or immigration procedures, or the collection of VAT at the frontier. I know about rabies and drug smuggling. If we were in earnest about getting a single market, we would be desperately seeking other ways of protecting ourselves against mad dogs and dope smugglers without seizing up the passage of goods across the Channel.

The completion of the Common Market, far distant though that now seems, is still not the real economic objective of the Community. Externally, as I should perhaps have said before, the Community has had notable success in enabling its members to exert far more influence in international organisations than they could possibly have exerted separately.

What corresponding achievements could there be internally? Surely what we should be finding in the budget documents are ever larger items for launch aid or the creation of suitable conditions for wealth-creating schemes which are too large, too complex and too slow in yielding cash returns to be undertaken by any one member state — major aerospace projects, satellites and launchers, new generation nuclear plants, way-out research projects, expensive battlefield weapons, indeed battlefield communications systems. Was it not preposterous for the Prime Minister to have to invoke our special relationship in a vain, humiliating attempt to get the United States to pay 50 per cent. more to buy Ptarmigan, when there is here so obvious a project for a joint European venture?

It is by making such ventures possible, not necessarily by direct Community financing but more by the creation of a European economic environment favourable to them, that the European Community can contribute far more than the separate efforts of its member states towards providing the people of Europe with jobs and prosperity. Of course, there are such projects already. There is the airbus family of civil aircraft, ESPRIT and joint defence projects, but they are ludicrously inadequate in number and scope.

I cannot claim that the budgets we are considering today will take us a measurable step in the direction which I am urging, but at least they ought to bury the silly interminable argument about the cost of belonging to the organisation on which our very life depends. If we go on snarling and whining over them, we will eventually succeed in convincing the rest of Europe that we want to sink the ship in which we have chosen to travel.

8.2 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I wish to offer my apologies to the Minister of State, Foreign Office, for my failure to be here when he spoke. I was at a meeting with the Prime Minister on a very important constituency matter. I am not sure that it was a satisfactory meeting for my constituents or myself.

I share the anxiety expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on the dispute about next year's price of cane sugar imports from the

African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. It is essential that the EEC and those countries should settle their differences as soon as possible in the interests of natural justice for the people of those sectors of the Third world. This is largely a constituency matter. My concern is about the quota levels for sugar production and the danger that we might have to spend more on the production of beet sugar. It is most important, because I believe that the European Council of agricultural Ministers is to meet next week to discuss the common organisation of the Market in the sugar sector.

There is growing concern, particularly in my constituency, about the intense and vigorous lobbying being mounted by the beet sugar industry for an utterly unnecessary increase in the sugar beet quota for the United Kingdom. That demand is based largely on a so-called need for sugar as a feed stock for the chemical industry. There have been some eccentric demand forecasts for the use of sugar as a feed stock in the chemical industry. The working party of the Ministry of Agriculture assumes that at a price of approximately £100 per tonne the whole of Europe could generate a demand of about 500,000 tonnes by 1990. In the United Kingdom, the demand, on the most optimistic forecast, will not exceed 100,000 tonnes. Others estimate that a figure of 50,000 tonnes is grossly excessive and that the most realistic figure is about 10,000 tonnes in 1990.

If there is an increase in the United Kingdom beet sugar quota and if, as seems likely, the demand for the chemical industry is illusory, the increased quota will have to find a market somewhere. I am sure that the EEC Commission would not agree to an increase in the United Kingdom quota if the increased production was to be exported. That would worsen the serious surplus of sugar produced in the EEC and would clash directly with the current direction of the common agricultural policy.

Given the illusory demand for sugar as a feedstock for the chemical industry, the only market for the additional sugar production would be in the United Kingdom itself. That might replace sugar which is at present produced at the Tate and Lyle refineries in London and Greenock; hence my constituency interest. In that eventuality, formidable problems would be generated for the Westburn sugar refinery in Greenock where 400 jobs are at risk. May I point out to the House that male unemployment in my constituency is about 25 per cent., a disastrously high level? Many other jobs are at risk in Scotland since the sugar refinery in my constituency is an essential element in the Scottish food and drinks industry which employs 15,000 to 20,000 people.

The reverse side of the coin is that it is in the interests of the African, Caribbean and Pacific cane sugar producing countries that the European Commission proposal be supported by British Ministers next week. That proposal is that the EEC should retain the existing quota levels for sugar production. If the Commonwealth is to survive an prosper, faith must be maintained in the arrangements made with honour at the time of our accession to the EEC.

8.7 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The tiny attendance at the debate shows how pointless the whole business is. The plain fact is that we are discussing a budget which provides extra cash without solving any of the problems whose existence is accepted by even the most fanatical supporters of the Common Market. There is nothing more to it than putting more cash into an organisation which is not solving any of its problems.

The second reason that makes the debate almost completely pointless is that we are discussing a draft budget, which has still to go through much haggling, and which will probably end up at a great deal more than the figures in front of us. It is probably not surprising that only a handful of Members are here, because they regard the whole business as a pathetic, pointless exercise.

Sir Anthony Meyer: My hon. Friend is complaining that we are debating a draft budget. If we were debating a completed budget, his complaint would be that it was too late to do anything about it. As we are debating a draft budget, we have the opportunity of putting our views to Ministers. Surely that is what my hon. Friend wants.

Mr. Taylor: Yes, I am grateful for that, but surely my hon. Friend, whose opinions I respect because he has been consistent and believes what he says, knows from his long experience that the budgets are decided, not by the Parliaments of member states, but by the representatives of member states sitting round the table haggling about different issues. Sadly, the views of a democratic Parliament are not important.

I was glad that what would otherwise have been a sterile debate was elevated by the brilliant speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann), whose meaningful suggestions for the reform of the EC compared splendidly with the sloganising fanaticism of the tiny group of individuals now led by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes). I hope that, if the debate achieves nothing else, Ministers will think carefully about the important points made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton and that they will bear them greatly in mind in the discussions that are to take place.

Perhaps the Common Market would be a better organisation if there were no budget. I am suggesting, not that we should have 10 per cent. more or less expenditure, but that the Common Market would perform in a better way if it had no budget. We should not have central institutions spending money on the Common Market, particularly when about 70 per cent. of all the cash goes on the squalid CAP.

What is the advantage of money going to Brussels and then being allocated, for example, for the regional or social fund, and then only for items which the Government in Whitehall have selected? It seems nonsense to have such a transfer of money, with every pound that is spent on so-called Europrojects costing the British taxpayer about £2. Instead of all the squabbles that we are having about how the money should be spent and what we should do about agriculture, the EC would be an infinitely better organisation if there were no budget.

I may be told that that would be impracticable, and I agree that it is difficult to argue the case, because in the present situation a great deal of money is being spent and the Government can bargain only so far. I am convinced, however, that if the Government adopted a policy of saying, "It would be a better Common Market if there were no spending," we should have something at which to aim, and if by any chance that aim were achieved, we should have harmony in the EC, with discussions about the real issues that matter and not about the nonsense of how we transfer cash from one country to another.

[Mr. Taylor]

As we are debating the EC budget, can we hope that the Government will, as they do with all other forms of home consumption, consider how we could save some of the money that is spent pointlessly in the EC? The Government have been imposing severe restraints at home, as my hon. Friend the Minister will be aware from his previous job. Those restraints are applied to housing and the NHS, among other things. I find it ridiculous that the Southend health authority, for example, should have been forced to close two wards because of cash restraints, yet we see money being spent in a ridiculous way in the EC.

The documents show that spending on the so-called European Parliament is to go up by 26·7 per cent. this year. Could not the EEC operate more effectively without a European Assembly? Because of the need for co-operation between member states, we must ask what is achieved by having this silly, powerless monstrousity which takes up the time of sensible, educated people, who talk, but who have no powers to do anything effective. They have two blunderbuss powers which are not, and probably never will be, used.

The problems of the Common Market are not being solved. I was appalled to receive a parliamentary answer recently showing that the enormous exports of food to the Soviet Union at knock-down prices had risen by 50 per cent. in the first six months of this year, following a substantial increase last year.

While looking through some of the astonishing Euro documents which flood into the Vote Office, I was astonished by a remarkable paper entitled "Regulation 2670/85" under which we are giving special extra subsidies for the export of beef to Third world countries. The effect is that beef is available for sale to the Soviet Union as from now at 15p per pound. How can we justify the spending in which the EEC is indulging, followed by the dumping of top qualify beef in Russia at that price, when the people of Britain are finding it difficult to pay the £3 per pound which they are charged in the shops?

What I have described is not a tiny, niggling figure. The Common Market now spends £100 million every week on the storage and destruction of food surpluses. This is a huge problem, and what is particularly worrying is that it is getting worse all the time, and there is nothing in the budget designed to tackle it.

The Government suggest, tongue in cheek, that something is being done, in that we have an agreement to limit agricultural spending. As we know, however, that agreement is full of holes. The figures can be overturned by any amount in any year if a majority of member states claim that there have been special circumstances in that year. In other words, nothing is being done about the scandal of dumping, with top quality beef being sold for 15p, flour for 6p and wine for 5½p a litre, with floods of the food going to the Soviet Union and east Europe. Something must be done about that. Nothing in the budget will achieve a change in the situation.

Mr. Baldry: It is easy for my hon. Friend, representing an urban constituency, to criticise the CAP. How would he advise the Government to go about reforming the CAP in a way that would not do severe damage to our agriculture, which has been successful? Would he advocate the introduction of quotas, taking land out of production, or leaving it simply to the price mechanism of the market place?

Mr. Taylor: I was coming to that very point. It is appalling for hon. Members to attack those such as I who say that because such spending is wrong, we are anti-British agriculture. My hon. Friend should care, not just about farming, but about, for example, the Third world, the countries which should be buying our manufactured goods and paying off their debts. Think of the devastation, misery, hardship and even death that is caused by this policy of dumping, which is forcing down world food prices to an appalling extent.

If European countries decide, for reasons best known to themselves, to provide subsidies for agriculture at any level, that is a matter for them, but they are not entitled to cripple world food markets by a scandalous policy of dumping, which is achieving nothing for ourselves and is undermining the Third world.

My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) says that it is easy for me, representing Southend, to make such complaints. I assure him that I have regular meetings with the farmers of Essex, members of the local NFU and other organisations. I met them only last week and made the point to them that while, with the support of hon. Members such as my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury, they had in some cases done extremely well out of the CAP, they were now heading for disaster. I believe that most of them accepted what I said.

If we allow the budget to go ahead without reform, British agriculture—I agree that it is efficient and that we want it to prosper — will be heading for total disaster. A crisis is coming because of accelerating food surpluses and an enormous increase in production potential. That will cause an explosion in agriculture. When that time comes, drastic steps will have to be taken. Those steps will hit British agriculture particularly hard, although the origin of the problem will not have been ours. British agriculture's main asset is that it is not a great over-producer of food. We over-produce to the tune of only 102 per cent., partly in cereals. We do not, however, have an overall surplus of food. It worries me immensely that before long very nasty things will happen to British agriculture because of a problem that is not of our making.

What should we do about it? My strong view is that there is no possibility of British agriculture enjoying long-term prosperity or of being able to engage in long-term planning so long as it is linked to the common agricultural policy. If British agriculture is to survive and prosper, it must disengage itself from the Community. If it can be disengaged from the CAP, British agriculture should be based on national deficiency payments and standard quantities of production, determined by the need of the British people for food. This policy would provide British agriculture with a good future. If the present policies are continued, British agriculture will do reasonably well this year, and it might do reasonably well next year, but after that it will face disaster because of the terrible crisis of over-production.

In particular, there is over-production of beef. The beef mountains are getting out of control. They are so much out of control that Europe has run out of refrigerated storage space. The Community is having to look elsewhere for refrigerated storage space. It would not be so bad if this were a temporary problem that might be offset by a bad

harvest next year, but on good land we are achieving yields of about 3 tonnes per acre. This yield is expected to rise to 6 tonnes per acre because of the various technical developments that are taking place. We are doing damage to consumers. They are paying £7 a week more for their food than they need to pay. We are also doing damage to the Third world by the iniquitous dumping policy. Furthermore, we shall be digging the grave of British agriculture if we do not take action very quickly indeed.

I am very worried that we shall not stay within the limits and that the member states will agree to exceed them. When that time comes, I am afraid that we shall have to use various devices. We shall have to use the strange accountancy adopted by the city of Liverpool to get round the crisis. Can my hon. Friend the Minister say whether the effect of transferring a large part of food aid to chapter nine will have the effect of taking it out of the agricultural budget? If it has that effect, I think we must accept that it is a very clever device to try to reduce the agricultural spending that is shown in the budget and prove that it is less than it is. It will be just a device to get round the so-called limits. Will the chapter nine expenditure be included in the agricultural budget? Will it be contained within the limit that we are told is to be the new ceiling?

This budget will cost Britain a great deal of money. When net payments amounted to about £500 million a year, hon. Members were concerned about its effect upon this country. According to the public expenditure White Paper, we shall be nearing a £1 billion net contribution by about 1987. This is only part of the cost. About £350 million a year represents not British receipts but money that is paid to British traders to export cheap food to the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and East Germany. The cost is therefore very considerable.

I am also concerned about its effect on trade. Our trade with the Community is disastrous. For every £3 of manufactured goods that we import, we send back only £2 of manufactured goods. When our oil revenues fade away, when asset sales dry up, and when we have to struggle on our own, our country will be in an appalling situation. The imbalance in our trade with the Community will create unfairness, and therefore unemployment. There will be an inevitable move towards the centre of the Community. We are on its periphery.

I can find no joy in this budget. It means that more money will be spent on the Community, without any of its problems being solved. It is time for the House of Commons to look at the future of British agriculture. It is easy to say that British agriculture is doing well and that we shall fight for it and ensure that no massive changes take place. However, the Government must know that because of the enormous acceleration in structural surpluses there will soon be an explosion. When that happens, British agriculture will be in great danger.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will not adopt the minority point of view that if the CAP is attacked British agriculture is also attacked. If we disengage our country from the CAP, we might save British agriculture. If we do not disengage ourselves from the CAP, the outlook for British agriculture is very bleak.

8.25 pm

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): I do not intend to echo the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). The contempt that he heaps upon the heads of those who favour and admire the European institutions is returned in equal measure. They reject the "little England" view that he and his followers try time after time to force down the throat of this House. We do not believe that he is the guardian of the nation's interests. I do not think he realises the great damage that he does to this country far outside this Chamber.

However unsatisfactory it may be, the common agricultural policy is a cornerstone of the European Community. It is one of its major achievements. At the same time it is one of its major and most serious problems. Article 39 of the treaty of Rome laid down its objectives. They are well known to all hon. Members. In its way, the Community has proved to be outstandingly successful. However, it is abysmally administered. To that extent I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East. But in this as in all other matters the House is obliged to try to take a balanced view of its successes as well as of its considerable problems and difficulties.

Paragraphs 65 and 66 of the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities report on the reform of the common agricultural policy read:

"Farming has always been the economic backbone of the Community's rural areas. The number of those engaged directly in farming as their full time activity has fallen and in many rural areas they are now a relatively small proportion of the population. The number of those dependent on agriculture is much greater. It includes hired workers, suppliers of services and requisities and those engaged in local marketing and processing of agricultural products. It also includes part time workers in a wide range of activities, sometimes seasonal like tourism, who use the farm as a home and a stable source of part of their income.

Outside the rural areas substantial sectors of the machinery, chemical and other industries and the employment they create in urban areas are also dependent on agriculture.

The collapse of established agricultural patterns could consequently be disastrous for rural areas dependent on farming. The viability of the whole social structure of such areas could be undermined. It is nevertheless important to underline that for many years farming has not been static. Change goes on all the time. Holdings are amalgamated and, in not a few cases, split up again. Land may be separated from farm houses, the former often helping to create more efficient management units, the latter bringing in new people with different occupations. Rural electrification and water supplies, improved country roads and widespread ownership of motor cars have had at least as great an effect on the economy and environment of country districts as the changes in agricultural productivity and management practices. Change will continue. To attempt to arrest it generally would be damaging. Farmers, let alone their sons and daughters, cannot be relegated to the rural slums of the inter-war period."

When discussing the reform of the CAP, we must consider the balance between its successes and its obvious limitations. We are obliged also to consider, with the greatest care and caution, proposals for its reform. But reform must and will come, and this Government have already done a great deal to prescribe a proper route.

The conclusion of the House of Lords report stated:

"The CAP is at a crossroads. Left unreformed it could break down and put the EEC in jeopardy . . . The Committee believe that the principal tool for reform must be an increased use of the price mechanism . . . The objectives of reform must be to diminish excessive stocks, to ease the cost of the CAP to the Community budget, to minimise international frictions resulting from disposal on world markets, to bring CAP spending within the strict budgetary controls agreed at Fontainebleau and to alter the present imbalance of the Community's economic resources."

It is useful to remind ourselves of the measure that passed through this House on 22 October, the European Communities (Finance) Bill, with a majority of 117. The Bill permits the new own resources decision to come into force with the automatic correction of our budgetary contribution from 1 January 1986, thereby reducing

[Mr. Nicholas Soames]

Britain's contribution to the budget by more than 2·6 billion ecu. A key element in the new system of own resources, to which the Bill gives effect, is the arrangement whereby United Kingdom contributions to the Community are abated automatically to compensate us for any overpayment in the preceding year.

We will be entitled to recover 66 per cent. of the gap between our VAT share of the Community's allocated budget and our share of the receipts from the budget. Unlike earlier budget rebates, that entitlement is embodied in Community legislation that cannot be altered by the European Parliament. It is beyond my wit to understand why my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East is so churlish about that impeccable result.

We will no longer have to fight each year to secure a refund, as has happened since the end of the transitional arrangements. Those refunds were becoming harder and harder to obtain. With effect from 1 January 1986, our VAT abatements will be automatic and geared to the amount of our net contribution. Our net contribution to new Community expenditure will be a maximum of 7 per cent. France will contribute up to 27 per cent. and Germany up to 31 per cent. As a result of the Fontainbleau agreement, France is likely to overtake Britain as a net contributor to the Community budget over the next two years, while the German net contribution is likely to be substantially higher than our corrected contribution.

Despite the increase in the Community VAT ceiling to 1·4 per cent., the United Kingdom VAT rate will remain below 1 per cent. The 1986 draft budget takes account of technical changes recently proposed, and implies a United Kingdom VAT rate next year of about 0·56 per cent. The other member states will pay about 1·2 per cent. By anyone's standards, that is a remarkably good deal for Britain.

The new system can be changed only by the unanimous decision of all member states, ratified by their sovereign Parliaments, including the United Kingdom Parliament. That will apply to any proposal to increase the VAT rate above 1·4 per cent. As a result of the Fontainebleau agreement, the Government have secured the payment in full of our 1983 refund of £434 million. In addition, to cover the year ended 31 December 1984, a fixed abatement of approximately £600 million has been agreed, and will be paid as soon as the new financial system has been ratified.

The Bill gives legislative effect to the automatic correction of our budgetary contribution, a purpose that successive British Governments have sought to achieve since we joined the Community in 1973. I and many other Conservative Back Benchers congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on their remarkable achievement. If the House agrees tonight to the Government's motion and takes note of these documents, it will do so because it will have acknowledged that the Government are specifically and emphatically pursuing vital British national interests.

That is why I cannot understand the attitude of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East and his colleagues. Indeed, the House will be making an important contribution to that fine adjustment that we have to undertake towards a far more positive participation in the affairs of Europe.

With the great tradition of realism in Tory foreign policy and with the knowledge of and feel for history and the hard-learned lessons over many years, I have never understood why the message of Europe has never really seized the United Kingdom.

When I look out over the vast panorama of Europe, at all the opportunities that exist there for our industry, services, institutions and people, I think that the concept should have a warmer glow to it.

The documents before us are an important manifestation of progress and change in Community affairs. The motion covers documents recommended for debate by the Scrutiny Committee of which I was a member. They cover the 1985 and 1986 budgets. The 1986 budget is now under discussion by the European Parliament which is considering the draft budget established by the Council of Ministers. There are a number of real achievements represented in these documents, for ourselves and, just as importantly, for Europe.

First, the Government have secured a lasting and automatic system known as the Fontainebleau system. This will reduce the excessive burden of the United Kingdom's net contribution. There are those who argue that it would have been better to allow the Community to run out of money in order to contain the costs of agricultural spending while we continued to pay at the full VAT rate. They overlook the cost that would have been incurred by the British taxpayer. We will no longer have to fight every year to secure a refund, as has happened since the end of the transitional arrangements, and, at last, Europe can begin to take a step forward.

Secondly, the Government are to be congratulated on further securing an effective mechanism for budgetary discipline and the control of agricultural spending. That is far better than anything the Community had before and — *[Interruption.]* It is not yet satisfactory, but we should not under-estimate the real progress that has been made.

Mr. Teddy Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Soames: It is evident of the broad feeling throughout the Community, led by our Government, that reform can no longer be delayed.

I have to agree with critics of the Community who say that the CAP is abysmally run, but they must concede that the British Government have pushed ahead a programme with great skill and vigour that will lead to further reforms of an even more substantive nature. Indeed, the progress that has been made is there for all to see in the draft budget for 1986. The budget differs from previous budgets in several respects. First, there is provision for full implementation of the Fontainebleau agreement in respect of the abatement of the UK's VAT contribution; secondly, the 1986 budget is the first to be governed by the guidelines for budgetary discipline; thirdly, the 1986 budget is the first since our resources were increased to 1·4 per cent. of the VAT base; and fourthly, 1986 is the first year of the Community of 12, and I am delighted that Spain and Portugal are to accede to the Community.

It is significant also that, for the first time in recent years, the debate on the budget was not dominated by disputes over the rebate that we believe was payable to us. We must press on to arrive at a harmonious, realistic and honourable solution.

When I reflect on what being in Europe means to Britain, I always find myself recalling George Bernard

Shaw's definition of a marriage — that it is an arrangement which appears to combine the maximum of temptation with the maximum of opportunity.

We have succumbed in our time to too many temptations in our dealings with Europe and we must start now to grasp the real opportunities that the Common Market has opened up for us. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West, (Sir A. Meyer), I wish to pay a warm tribute to the work of Lord Cockfield in respect of the development of the internal market. I pay tribute to the Kangaroo group for the admirable work which it has done. That is an example of it being right to say that one man who has a mind and knows it can always beat 10 men who have not and do not.

The Government must resolve in their mind what Britain seeks to get out of the Common Market and what it believes it will be able to contribute to the Common weal. Of particular interest, as my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West said, is the successful application, with Europe's money, of modern technological techniques on an increasingly continental and not national basis. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury, when he replies, will say something about that, and about what is being done to plan investment, research and production strategies to match these great opportunities.

If the Government were to give a positive lead in that direction, British businesses which have hitherto preferred to cultivate their own domestic back garden might consider getting into their own European back garden, which now stretches from the Mediterranean to the Arctic circle and from eastern Europe to the western approaches. These are the dimensions of the British home market and the dimensions in which the British Government must think.

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Gentleman is probably an expert on geography, but will he tell us exactly where the European Community touches the Arctic circle? Since the withdrawal of Greenland, it is not too easy to visualise where that happens.

Mr. Soames: I used some geographic licence. I am grateful that that is the only issue on which the hon. Gentleman seeks to shoot down my peroration. I am grateful to him for ruining my speech.

The Government must gear themselves to realising that it is now their duty — they lay claim to vigorous and imaginative leadership — to pursue every opportunity that remains open to us in the broader European concept. Britain still has a great deal to do in exploiting a vast homogeneous market. I hope that the Community will continue to be an outward-looking organisation that is dedicated to the promotion of free and fair trade and responsive to the needs of developing countries.

In 1985, only 10 per cent. of the Community's food aid budget was used for famine relief. That is an obscenely low figure, and I urge the Government, with all my heart, to ensure that the Community does a great deal better in the years ahead. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury will seek to persuade it to re-order its priorities in that respect and to respond to the deeply held concerns of all Europeans by being far more generous in future.

Experience has shown that Europe cannot and will never flourish, let alone attain its full vigour and potentially great influence, in the stony and infertile soil of national interest. We must consolidate through the reform of existing policies and further enlargement. Those who reflect on these things know what has to be done. What we need is the will to do it.

8.44 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): I endorse and support the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames). It is perhaps indicative of the Opposition's attitude that the only argument that they could advance during the course of it was a nitpicking criticism of my hon. Friend's geography.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) leaves the House in no doubt about his attitude towards the European Community. Perhaps I can serve on him and others in the House notice that there are growing numbers of people who are tired of having debates on Europe used simply as opportunities for knocking copy on the European Community. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East leaves the House in no doubt as to his attitudes. In a recent article in a magazine called the *Crusader*, he alleged that the arguments about the numbers of jobs directly related to membership of the European Community come

"largely from the taxpayer-paid Common Market propaganda machine".

They are

"bogus, untrue or totally misleading."

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: There is no question of a propaganda machine. I circulated all the employers in my constituency and they all agreed that unemployment would soar dramatically if we left the Common Market.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend is right. There is no doubt that the European Community gives British manufacturers and industry access to a secure home market that would otherwise be beyond our dreams.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East went on in the same article to portray the European Community as "a Socialist organisation". Given this continuous tirade against the European Community by some hon. Members, it is time to remind ourselves of a few basic facts about Britain's membership of the Community. The straightforward reality is that it is in Britain's best interests to make a success of the European Community. Who wants to withdraw from Europe? The extreme Left does and that can hardly be because it sees Europe as a Socialist organisation. Quite the opposite, the Left knows full well that the European Community offers the best chance to provide the greatest possible economic growth in the member countries. That economic growth can pay for the doctors, teachers, nurses, schools and hospitals that we all want in a caring society, and can destroy the wild illusions of the Left, which actually wants economic failure for its own perverse reasons.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend has been kind enough to do some astonishing research on the excellent articles that I have written on this subject. I suggest that he does an equal amount of research on the recent statements, speeches and articles in the extreme Left newspapers such as *Marxism Today*. He will find that the extreme Left is beginning to realise what it should have realised years ago — that it is nonsense for the Labour party to talk about leaving Europe when it is a way in which Socialists can achieve the objectives that they will never achieve through a British Parliament, such as worker-controlled industry.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend makes his own point, which is that it would be in the interests of the extreme Left to see Britain lead Europe because it wishes to see us fail. When Conservative Members have to pray in aid nothing less than *Marxism Today*, we have reached a sad state.

The House should never forget that Britain, by geography, history and self-interest, has a central and vital role to play in shaping the political and economic future of the European Community. Because of the insistence of the Conservative Government, Europe has tackled the difficult tasks of reform of the common agricultural policy, and control of Community spending and the budget problem, none of which would have been resolved under a Labour Government. All these reforms would not have been achieved without the drive and tenacity of Britainest under a Conservative Government and of a Europe with Britain in the Community.

Every member country is now determined to achieve a truly free market in goods and services by 1992. Let it never be forgotten that Europe already takes almost half of our exports, which means that hundreds and thousands of jobs in Britain depend on our selling to and with our European partners.

There are still many barriers to raise to make it easier and cheaper for people to trade and travel in Europe. As a start, we could resolve to make it as cheap for people to travel by air across Europe as to fly across the United States of America. We must never forget that Europe is about more than the Common Market, free trade and economic success. It is about 12 sovereign nations together exercising influence and power to challenge protectionism, strengthen democracy and promote economic change in Europe and the world. That is what we want to achieve.

Conservative Members are determined that Britain shall be in the forefront of the Western industrialist world politically and economically. The Prime Minister has ensured that in recent years Britain has been in the forefront of decision making in the Western world. The framework of the EC has greatly assisted Britain in ensuring that our voice is heard, and Britain can best achieve her potential as a nation in a common endeavour with our partners in the EC.

The joint economic and political strength of the EC is enormous. It is well able to compete with Japan and the United States, and to balance the super-power politics of power blocs, such as the Warsaw pact. Conservatives are determined to build an EC which will better enable us all to meet the challenges of the 21st century, and which will ensure that Europe is at the forefront of modern industrial and technological development.

Obviously, much work needs to be done. It will best be done in a spirit of positive co-operation and of wanting to succeed. We want to have the best possible barrier-free market, to introduce a single administrative document for the passage of goods across internal frontiers within the Community, to let people move more freely, and to ensure that every business in Britain gains the maximum benefit from being part of the largest home market in the world.

Alas, a quarter of a century after the signing of the Treaty of Rome, Europe still bristles with customs posts. Red tape clogs the channels of trade. It is estimated that the total cost to industry of passing through Community frontiers is $10 billion a year, all of which adds an estimated 5 to 10 per cent. to the cost of goods, and makes European goods less competitive. Urgent action is needed to ensure that we have a barrier-free Community as soon as possible—a European Community in which goods, services, capital and people can move across internal frontiers as freely as within each member country.

The potential is enormous. It is to create the world's biggest and wealthiest home market with unlimited opportunities for enterprising industry and commerce, and thus to re-establish Europe as a leading world economic power. Things must change, and that is why the EC is and must be committed to the removal of all existing barriers and the creation of a unified market by 1992. The need for Europe to act is urgent, if the continent is not to fall behind the rest of the world.

Of every 10 personal computers sold in the EC in 1983, eight were manufactured in the United States. Of every 10 video recorders sold in the EC in 1983, nine were made in Japan. Between 1980 and 1983, production of electronic goods in Britain grew by 44 per cent., whereas imports of electronic goods grew by 110 per cent. Separately and alone, European nations have little chance of competing with the high technology of Japan and the United States.

Conservatives have a clear vision of the Europe that we want. It is a strong enterprising Community, realising its full economic potential and helping to provide jobs and wealth to British people. The House should never forget that the British Government have secured a lasting automatic system — the Fontainebleau abatement mechanism, which will reduce the excessive burden of the United Kingdom's contribution to the EC budget. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) may well smirk, in reality——

Mr. Soames: Does not my hon. Friend find it difficult to understand why the Opposition find the Fontainebleau abatement so distasteful?

Mr. Baldry: I never cease to be amazed at why the Opposition scorn any British success, particularly success which leads to greater prosperity and more jobs. It is a source of constant amazement, and I can only presume that it is because in their hearts the Opposition want to see Britain fail.

Under the system which the British Government have achieved, Britain will pay the Community half of what we would have paid had there been no correction of our contribution. Britain has also secured an effective mechanism of budgetary discipline and control of agricultural spending. This is far better than anything which the Community had before. The rate of growth of agricultural guarantees spending has been reduced dramatically from 16 per cent. in 1984 to 9 per cent. in 1985 and 5·3 per cent. in 1986.

We have to do much more as a matter of urgency to reform the common agricultural policy. However, for the first time, the common agricultural policy has assured that Britain and Europe have secure supplies of food. For the first time since the reform of the Corn Laws we are exporting grain, and for the first time in a number of centuries we are almost self-sufficient in the supplies of foodstuffs. Sensible reforms need to be made, but let us not knock or forget the achievements of the common agricultural policy and their effects on the British farmer and the British consumer.

Mr. Cash: I applaud what my hon. Friend has said about the need for sensible reforms. Many reforms are

needed in relation to the common agricultural policy and I hope that, as he continues his speech, he will press for those reforms.

Mr. Baldry: No hon. Member is unaware of the need to reform the common agricultural policy. No British farmer is blind to the fact that it needs urgent reform. However, in seeking that reform, let us not knock what has been achieved. The Member of the European Parliament for the Cotswolds, Sir Henry Plumb, and I met many farmers who are our mutual constituents. They are well aware of the need for urgent reform, but how are we to achieve this? Do we simply do it by quotas? We all recognise the problems presented by the introduction of milk quotas. Do we simply do it by prices and let the market take over? This would mean that British farming, which is efficient, would be penalised disproportionately. Do we find some way of taking land out of production and making it fallow?

There are no easy options, but those of us who wish Europe to succeed are determined to explore the options diligently and conscientiously. We shall do so from the basis of wanting the European Community to succeed. That is what distinguishes us from the Opposition. We want to work together to make Europe work together for jobs and prosperity. We want to strive together to make Europe succeed.

8.57 pm

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) is not present——

Mr. Baldry: I am not.

Mr. Knowles: I share my hon. Friend's sentiments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East thinks he is speaking for the people of this country. In reality, he is not. He is fighting the same old battle which was fought in Parliament and in the country in the 1960s——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: And lost.

Mr. Knowles: And lost, from his point of view. Britain is a member of the European Community and there it will remain. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East speaks about having no budget and no expenditure, but that is utter nonsense and should be denounced as such. He and those who agree with him want to have it both ways. All of us would like to have it both ways, but this is not realistic. One cannot have a national veto and sensible Community decisions. The two have proved to be incompatible.

I am glad to see the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) in his place, because I wish to follow some of his arguments. Those who oppose the development of the Community on nationalist grounds believe that they can recreate an idyllic age, with an independent United Kingdom; but such an age never existed and such a world cannot be recreated. If we went down that path, we would not have an independent United Kingdom; we would ensure that Britain and all the countries of western Europe would become colonies of the United States and of Japan. One of the fathers of the American constitution, Benjamin Franklin, said:

"We must indeed hang together, or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately."

We have no choice in Europe; we must hang together. The further we progress with unification, the better it will be for all of us. Those who oppose further steps towards unification do not propose national independence; they propose turning their countries into colonies of the superpowers. The reality of today's world is that power matters. It might be a pleasanter world if it did not, but that is the cold, hard reality that we must face and we had better get on with it.

How can we make the Community work better than it does? We should take two steps. First, the meetings of the Council of Europe should be opened to public view. The Council is the legislature of the Community; it is the only legislature that meets in complete secrecy. It should be opened so that the people of the Community can see what decisions are being made in their names and why. Secondly, the power that is shared between the Council and the Commission must be extended to the European Parliament.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) said, 'cash is king—he who controls the budget is in charge.' The difficulty in the Community is that settling the budget, especially the agricultural budget, is rather like a group of people going to a restaurant, each of whom has agreed to share the bill equally. Everyone orders the most expensive dishes on the menu and the last person in the queue must decide whether, if he orders the cheapest meal, he will get the best deal. The answer is no. He must change the system. There is no point in being abstemious if one is going to lose badly.

Hon. Members have mentioned a deadline for a common market. The Cockfield report mentioned a deadline of 1992. We could do it, but not if 12 national Governments try to pick up the bits they want and leave the rest. We want a unit, not a skeleton picked clean, with the Cockfield report joining all the other reports that litter the shelves of Europe.

We have the chance to build a common market, but there is a political price to pay. We cannot build a common market that will give us opportunities in manufacturing and service industries without strengthening our common institutions. Some people want the Community to develop into a sort of super EFTA. We tried to float the idea of a free trade area 20 years ago, but it will not work. If we want the benefits of a common market, we need common political institutions. The two are inextricably linked and there is no divorcing them. I would be more than willing to go down that path—the sooner the better.

To return to the matter that we are supposed to be debating, I foresee many problems with the 1986 budget. One of the difficulties about the Community's budget is that it must balance every year. One can imagine the problems for any Chancellor of the Exchequer who had to balance his budget every year. It is the only institution I can think of that has to do that. It cannot raise loans. If there is a big impact, a big cost in one year, although realistically it should be spread over a longer period, it has to be met in that year.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us the difference between a loan and a non-reimbursable advance, which is what this Parliament was asked to give to the European Community on two occasions in the past year?

Mr. Knowles: That is exactly right. We all recognise that was a difficulty and we all laughed over the wording. I would prefer to face the reality of the situation and treat

[Mr. Knowles]

the Community as a proper organ of Government, rather than go through the kind of nonsense we have gone through.

I will go back to a point that I made earlier—that when the Community gets a long-term cost, it has to be met in one year. This year there is the cost due to the entry of Spain and Portugal. Those countries are coming in in January next year and the cost has to be met out of the current budget. That cannot be spread, as perhaps it should, over three or four years; it has to be met in one year. That is one of the problems in the 1986 budget.

The council has happily accepted a political commitment—the admission of Spain and Portugal. It has also built up the burdens of the past three or four years, when it accepted commitments in all areas but would not provide the money to pay for those burdens. It has been shuffling money around and robbing Peter to pay Paul for the past few years. The Community can only do that for so long. Now it has to meet the burdens of the past.

The Council has deleted two large items from the budget. That is irresponsible, because sooner or later those costs will have to be met. What is the Council thinking about? Is it expecting the Community to run out of money and producing an interim budget half way through next year? Those costs will have to be met, certainly in respect of Spain and Portugal. Is it going to try to shuffle the pack again in order to remove the burdens of the past and put back the pay day to some future date? I am not at all sure.

Of course, it is not just the Council which has to deal with the budget. Here we come to the crunch. The Council has to go to the European Parliament. As we heard earlier from the Minister, substantial restructuring of the budget has taken place. The European Parliament has restructured that budget. That demonstrates that the European Parliament is responsible and, indeed, the political locomotive behind the European Community. The Council, which represents the national states, fudged and dodged that issue.

Mr. Cash: Perhaps I may take my hon. Friend's argument a little further. Does he agree that the current proposals of the Commission about the increase in the powers of the European Parliament should be carried to the point at which the consent of the European Parliament, in conjunction with the Commission and the Council of Ministers, is in line with the recent document placed before the Council of Ministers? If so, in a variety of ways the Parliament at Westminster would effectively be bypassed.

Mr. Knowles: The reality of the matter—and here we kid ourselves—is that we are effectively bypassed. At what point in the process does this Chamber have power over what the Government do? There may be a theoretical power, but the reality is that it does not and cannot exist. The House of Commons tried the constitutional experiment of ruling through Committees, and it failed. Admittedly, that was 300 years ago under the Commonwealth, but it was tried and it failed.

Governments must have a free hand in negotiations with other nation states. The European Parliament is the only other representative body that can have a say. It represents the whole of the Community. If the House wants a veto, the Chambers of nine other nation states —soon there will be 11 others—will also want that power. That would create a locked system. It is bad enough now, but it would become totally impossible. We must face reality. We shall have to give power to the popularly elected assembly.

Sir Russell Johnston: Is not the veto an advantage to someone who wants to maintain the status quo? We do not want to do that. The people with an interest in the veto are those who made the original compact and want to maintain the status quo.

Mr. Knowles: If we wish to develop the Community —it is in our interest to do so—a national veto will not serve our long-term interests. In the long term, it will not serve the interests of any member state. Of course, a short-term gain can be grabbed, but, in our long-term interests, the veto must go. I am prepared to face the reality that the European Parliament must be given real power. If the British Parliament cannot exercise sovereignty, however notional it may be, I would rather shed that sovereignty to another popularly elected body than see it in the hands of a Council dealing with national Governments or of a Commission appointed by those national Governments.

The European Parliament has substantially reconstructed this year's budget. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury, but this is one of the few times when the House can ask the Government in advance what they will do in the Council. What will be the Council's position when the budget goes back to it? Will it accept the changes to take on board the cost of Spain and Portugal and the burdens of the past, or will it take out those measures? We could be heading for an interesting constitutional crisis. The European Parliament might put those items back into the budget on Second Reading. The President of the Parliament might sign that budget. The only way in which one could then stop the budget from being administered by the Commission would be by the Council or a national Government taking the European Parliament to court. I suspect that a solution will be found before we reach that point. We have headed down these paths before, but it is an interesting problem.

The European Parliament has been described in this and previous debates as totally powerless, but that is not so. My right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton put his finger on a truth about all parliamentary democracies—that control of Supply is the important issue. Hon. Members seem to have grasped that point today. It will raise interesting problems for the other institutions in the Community and for all the national Parliaments, including the British Parliament.

9.13 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Recently, I have sat through a few debates in which hon. Members have begun by saying, "I shall not follow the points made by the hon. Member who preceded me," but usually they have done so because they have had prepared speeches and did not wish to be diverted. I do not believe that that is in keeping with the spirit of our debates. I shall follow the points of the hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles). I shall pick up also the points made by other hon. Members. I apologise for this apparent eccentricity.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Do not do it too often.

Mr. Foulkes: I shall not, but it is an occasional blessing to do so.

This has not been the occasion for a wide-ranging debate on the future of the Community, although we have had contributions from the hon. Member for Nottingham, East, and the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), who made a thoughtful and excellent speech. By saying that, I hope that I do not do him any harm. We also had a contribution from the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), who has the same problem as I have, in that people have difficulty in remembering the full title of his constituency.

Those hon. Members all gave us a clear explanation of their view of the Community. They want Britain to become increasingly integrated into a unified Community. There is no doubt about that, because everything that they said about the veto, and about the whole concept of the Community, is clear. Other Members have shown that. There are other tendencies in the Conservative party, but there seems to be a growing tendency in that direction. The implication of that, as the Leader of the House knows better than anyone, is that the sovereignty of this parliament and the United Kingdom is under threat. That is increasingly shown in the speeches of Conservative Members.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, East spoke eloquently about the lack of control that the House has over the Executive. I agree with him, and I would like to see greater control. I hope that we can look at our procedure and provide greater control and scrutiny. That is a separate argument from giving up our total responsibility to a supranational institution, or increasing the amounts of our responsibility. The two arguments must not be confused or interlinked in the way that the hon. Member for Nottingham, East has done.

There is no secret about the Opposition's concept of Europe, and I am surprised that Conservative Members still think that there is. We want to see the Community move towards a looser and wider federation with, for example, more political co-operation. The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) touched on that. I do not know how many hon. Members realise how much political co-operation there is at the United Nations and in other multinational bodies. My hon. Friends and I welcome that co-operation and we would like to see greater political co-operation on issues such as South Africa, central America and so on. There is no secret about our desire for a looser, wider federation, and we welcome the accession of Spain and Portugal as a move in that direction.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: May we now take that to be official Labour party policy?

Mr. Foulkes: There is no secret about our policy. It is not defined in one booklet. It was included in our manifesto for the European elections and it has been outlined by the Leader of the Opposition on a number of occasions. The direction in which we want to see the Community move is not in doubt.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, East, after talking about his vision for the Community, engagingly said that he would like to speak on the subject of the debate, and I should now like to do that.

I was pleased to hear the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) participate in the debate, though he did not live up to the billing given by his agent, the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). I found his speech somewhat confusing and confused, and I think that other Conservative Members thought the same, judging by their reactions and interruptions.

There is one important point that should be followed up, particularly with the Leader of the House present. The right hon. Member for Taunton referred to the accountability of Ministers in relation to the Community.

The Opposition feel—and there have been informal discussions about this—that there ought to be greater ministerial accountability to the House of what Ministers do on behalf of this Parliament. For example, there has recently been a depressing trend of Ministers taking part in important meetings of the Council of Ministers, but not giving oral reports to the House. This is a discourtesy to the House, and I hope that the Leader of the House will do something to ensure that oral statements are made by the appropriate Minister following major meetings of the Commission.

There are so many pieces of European legislation coming before the House that it takes up a great deal of our time. There may be other ways of dealing with this. The right hon. Member for Taunton and others referred to the possibility of a special Committee. It has even been suggested that there might be a European Grand Committee which could go more fully into the details of European legislation, which affects us all in so many ways. The Opposition would co-operate in such discussions and would not inhibit them in any way.

The debates that we have—this is another of them—concern money, the budget and the nitty-gritty of the European Community. Inevitably, the Community is always asking for more. These debates are like regular performances of "Oliver Twist". Already this year there have been three debates—on the supplementary budget, in January, followed by the discussions on the inter-governmental agreement, and as recently as 22 October there was a passage of the Bill to increase the Community's own resources. We are now discussing a huge increase in the Community's budget, which goes ever upwards.

There has been much — perhaps deliberate — obfuscation by Conservative Members about the real contributions being made by Britain to the European Community, but the budget prepared by the Commission tells the terrible truth about the EEC. It tells of the kind of runaway expenditure which my hon. Friends the Members for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) and for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) predicted, and that runaway expenditure exposes the myth and mirage of budgetary discipline.

In his usual eloquent and Churchillian way, the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) praised the supposed budgetary discipline, but in reality it is a mirage and myth. I accept that the budget contains three new factors. From 1 January the Community will be enlarged to 12, there is the new VAT ceiling of 1·4 per cent., and there are the supposed budgetary discipline arrangements. But the Commission's budget, which takes account of the reality of spending in the Community, now amounts to 34·9 billion ecu. Already, that is 1·35 per cent. of VAT, and that less than a month after the House approved an increase to 1·4 per cent. which was to last into the foreseeable future——

Mr. Marlow: No.

Mr. Foulkes: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury, will no doubt say, if he is asked, that the Government have given no commitment to go beyond 1·4 per cent. and that they will not agree to another IGA in any circumstances that my hon. Friend can visualise. My hon. Friend can visualise the dollar going mad and massive European surpluses, but the Government have said that we will not go beyond 1·4 per cent. That remains the case.

Mr. Foulkes: If the hon. Gentleman really believes those Government assurances, he is more naive than I had given him credit for. We are already at 1·35 per cent. and are beginning to nudge the ceiling that was supposed to last for so long. We are only 900 million ecu below that ceiling —a 12 per cent. increase, three quarters of which is due to past commitments. As we know, a huge amount of that is due to agricultural spending, an increase in agricultural guarantees and an increase in agricultural guidance.

Conservative Members have been talking about the farmers. I am a strange being on the Opposition Benches —I am a Labour Member who represents an agricultural constituency. I am as concerned about the farmers as is the hon. Member for Crawley. My concern for them is just as great as that of the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). What is really important, however, is to ensure that the money that we spend on agriculture actually goes to the farmers who need it and not on the storage and destruction of surplus products. If it were to go to the farmers, we would certainly welcome that.

Mr. Baldry: I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving way, because I cannot let him escape quite so easily. He indicated during the speech of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) that he would tell the House how the Labour party intended to reform the agricultural policy. We know that it intends to rate agricultural land. Perhaps he can now tell us how his party intends to reform the CAP.

Mr. Foulkes: If the hon. Member is patient and does not interrupt, I shall come to that.

The Commission budget, for the first time in the history of the Common Market, proposes a smaller increase in the social and regional funds—smaller than the maximum permissible. Instead of the over 7 per cent. which could be included, we have only 5 per cent., and there are also cuts proposed in research and development, innovation and co-operation. As the hon. Member for Nottingham, East rightly said, the Council cut the draft budget. The Commission budget was based on reality, the frightening reality of the runaway budget, but the Council cut it. Even with that cut, to 32 billion ecu, it is still above the self-imposed limit — this budgetary restraint that we hear about—which the Council set itself.

In cutting the budget, the Council acted irresponsibly. It has postponed decisions on past commitments. It leaves out any provision for Spain and Portugal, and both those countries will have to be taken into account at some time. So, it is only putting off the evil day when these matters have to be taken into account. Worst of all—and this is the one issue on which I agree with the hon. Member for Crawley, the one area where he was probably expressing the views not just of the House but of the whole country — is the despicable decision to reduce the money available for food aid.

I ask the Minister of State to explain this when he replies to the debate, because he has a particular responsibility for it. He attended the meeting at which the decision was taken. In fact, he advocated reducing the amount of money available for food aid. He said, "Reports of rain in Africa mean that the extra allocation is unnecessary." Has anyone ever heard such rubbish in all his life? Will a few showers in Africa relieve the poverty of years? Will this rain provide the people with the kind of food that they need to relieve the present desperate hardship?

Mr. Cash: If the hon. Gentleman has read the report of the Court of Auditors for last year, does he agree that many of the difficulties were caused by the Commission, the European Parliament, and their administrative delays, as set out clearly in that document?

Mr. Foulkes: Of course, there is bureaucracy and red tape, as I have said from this Dispatch Box before, but the miserly decision of the Council of Ministers is another part of it and the Government must take the prime responsibility for that. The Council has certainly not solved the budgetary problem. It has postponed decisions.

There are two choices for the future facing the decision-makers in the Community. They can renege on past commitments, which would have a disastrous effect on the constituencies of Conservative Members, because the regional fund which the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West was criticising so roundly is actually financing road and infrastructure projects in Britain at the moment. If the commitments are not fulfilled, expenditure will have to stop or we shall need a further whipround, which we cannot expect, as the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) said.

Mr. Jackson: I thought the hon. Gentleman said that he was in a favour of a looser type of Community, which I assume would not have a regional or social fund.

Mr. Foulkes: My argument is that while we have such funds, we should take advantage of them. If we had a looser framework, we should be keeping our money instead of getting it back from the Community.

The European Parliament has now taken its part in the merry-go-round of decision-making in the Community. It has reinstated 3 billion ecu to the budget. What will be the response of our representative on the Council of Ministers to the reinstatement by the Parliament of 3 billion ecu? A former parliamentary colleague, Mrs. Barbara Castle, proposed major reductions in agricultural spending, but only members of the British Labour Group in the European Parliament supported her. Why did Conservative Members support not her proposal for major reductions in agricultural expenditure if that is Government policy?

We have had some misinformation about the British contribution. I have been asked to explain my party's attitude to the Fontainebleau abatement mechanism. Those who ask that question must either be deaf or wish not to have heard what the Opposition have said on a number of occasions. We supported the Government in asking for that rebate, and we welcomed it. However, we want the truth to be told about its effect. The figures are clear. They mean not a reduction in Britain's net contribution to the European Community, but a constantly increasing contribution. If the Minister thinks that I am wrong, he can refute the figures.

The figures in the autumn statement reveal an escalating contribution by Britain to the European Community. It is the only area of expenditure which seems to be openended without cash limits or control. All that money is going to agriculture, surpluses and the destruction of surpluses, rather than to the social and regional funds which could help Britain.

Farm spending is increasing out of control. Three separate reports deal with the huge escalating commitments to the CAP—the Green Paper produced by the Commission, the House of Lords Select Committee report and a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The Commission's Green Paper says clearly that whereas in the 1970s there was a reasonable balance in supply and demand, in the 1980s vast surpluses of products for which there was no demand developed. The Green Paper takes account of the obligations to agriculture and says that there can be no alternative to a price policy based on the realities of demand and supply.

The hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) was wrong when he referred to a price policy. As I understand it, efficient farmers will not be harmed by such a price policy. I do not understand the basis of the Minister's argument when he says that they would be harmed.

The House of Lords Select Committee has been quoted on many occasions, and I shall not burden the House with repetition. The Committee predicted that the cost of the CAP would rise to £20 billion and that cereal stocks would increase to 89 million tonnes. The Committee clearly stated that the CAP had not resulted in aid for the poorer farmers but had helped to make rich farmers richer. That should not be the Community's policy. The Committee recommends that the European Community should move towards a policy of restrictive pricing — although it would need courage to enforce it — and realistic thresholds, combined with direct economic support to help poor farmers in difficulties.

The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General lists the disadvantages to Britain of the CAP—the costs of storage and destruction amounting to £7 billion in 1980 and the damage to relations with developing countries.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and others have mentioned the difficulty of our relations with developing countries and the social problems arising from the CAP. The Comptroller and Auditor General's report recommends that we separate farmers' economic needs from social needs, and that prices should be used to benefit consumers and the developing countries.

From different points of view, three reports have considered the CAP with expertise and intelligence and come to the same conclusions. The Labour party supports analysis and reform of the CAP along the lines of the reports' recommendations to ensure that money is not wasted, but is used effectively.

It annoys the Opposition that while money goes into the CAP, the social fund, which needs money for training and retraining the unemployed, is being cut. It has been cut by 25 per cent. because of the actions of the Council of Ministers and our representative on that Council. The demand for the social fund has increased from 752 applications in 1982, to almost 5,000 in 1985. The Government's response has not been to provide more money for training the unemployed, but to reduce the areas eligible for assistance, from the Western Isles to Devon, including Powys and many others. At a time when unemployment is at its highest ever, 8 million Europeans no longer benefit from the social fund. The regional fund has been cut also, while the agricultural fund has mushroomed.

Our approach to the European Community is different from that of the Government. The Government's approach is to support the status quo and minimise our net contribution to the European Community. They have done nothing to encourage fundamental reform of the CAP. At the same time, the British Government representative on the Council of Ministers is trying to stop any possible benefits. Progressive social directives on employee consultation and information, on part-time workers, on parental leave and workers' participation are being vetoed by our representative on the Council of Ministers.

The organs of the European Community have a supposedly great phrase. They talk of something called "the people's Europe". They do not mean the ordinary people who would benefit from the kind of progressive legislation that might come out of Europe, from the social fund and the regional fund and from measures to reduce unemployment. They do not mean the people who would benefit from co-ordinating the reflation that is necessary to provide the jobs that are needed, not just in Britain, but throughout the European Community. They mean only the rich farmers. They are the only people who have benefited substantially from the common agricultural policy, which represents the main area of the Community's expenditure. Until the Community addresses itself to Europe's real problems—unemployment and poverty—it will become increasingly irrelevant to the vast majority of the people of Europe.

9.40 pm

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Ian Gow): I start with the agreeable task of thanking the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and the Scrutiny Committee for the work that he and the Committee do. The House would wish to join me when I say that the hon. Gentleman is most vigilant in ensuring that the House's interests in Community matters are protected.

My second happy task is to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) — I know that the House will want to join me — on his appointment as president of the Conservative European Reform Group. I congratulate him not just on that august appointment but on his maiden speech as president.

Towards the end of his speech, my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office referred to a pamphlet written by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), whom we welcome rather belatedly to our proceedings. When my hon. Friend referred to that pamphlet there was some disquiet upon the Opposition Front Bench. The House will be aware that I am a keen student of manifestos and election addresses written by those who arrive in the House. Although, of course, the debate is about the papers which are before us and the Government's policy, the Labour party's policy in these matters is not without interest.

I wish to remind the House and especially the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), that champion of the Falkland Islanders, of what the Labour manifesto said that the Labour party would have done if elected. That at least was clear; whether, if

[Mr. Ian Gow]

elected, the Labour party would have done what it said it would do is immaterial. I wish to pay tribute to its clarity. It said:

"British withdrawal from the Community is the right policy for Britain—to be completed well within the lifetime of the parliament. That is our commitment."

I wish to talk about the hon. Gentleman's election address, of which, for greater accuracy, I have a copy. He said that Labout will

"take Britain out of the EEC."

[Interruption.] Oh yes. But what do I find when I turn to page 389 of *Dod's Parliamentary Companion*. You are a keen student of these matters, Mr. Speaker, and you will be familiar with the words which appear under the hon. Gentleman's name on that page which states

"Scottish Organiser European Movement."

Naturally, I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, because he will wish to explain to you, first, Mr. Speaker, then to the House and then to his constituents, who voted for hin. on the basis of that manifesto, when he gave up that appointment as organiser of the European movement. I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Foulkes: The date on which I gave up that appointment is in Dod's. If the hon. Gentleman would continue reading, he would find it.

Mr. Gow: No, the hon. Gentleman is wrong. It is an error to believe that Her Majesty's Ministers are incapable of reading. It says,

"Scottish Organiser European Movement."

I will hand the book to the hon. Gentleman and perhaps he will tell the House what the date was.

I turn from the hon. Gentleman to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald), who opened the debate for the Opposition. She is well known as a valiant and courageous Member of the House. What did she have to say about Europe in her election address? I have scanned the address and rescanned it. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley thinks that I am not good at reading, but I have read the hon. Lady's election address assiduously. The courageous hon. Lady said nothing at all about Europe in her election address.

Mr. Foulkes: She was more clever than I was, was she not?

Mr. Gow: So we have from the hon. Gentleman who wound up for the Opposition a very clear commitment to get out of Europe and we have from the hon. Lady who opened for the Opposition total silence on the subject. Mercifully, we are able to turn for guidance about the policy of the Labour party on Europe to a publication, *Marxism Today*, with which you, Mr. Speaker, are as familiar as I am. In last month's edition the following words appear in an interview granted by the deputy leader of the Opposition:

"I am unashamedly and unreservedly for British membership of the EEC."

The House is entitled to know the view of the Opposition. We have heard the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, a foreign affairs spokesman for the Labour party. Seated at his right hand is the hon. Member for Thurrock, a senior and distinguished economic spokesman for the Labour party. I have read out to the House the view of the deputy leader of the Labour party. Now I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman so that he may explain to the House whether it is the policy of the Labour party to stick to the manifesto on which it fought and lost the election on 9 June 1983 or whether that is now repudiated.

Mr. Foulkes: I explained at the beginning of my reply to the debate exactly what our position on Europe is. I then went on for 20 minutes to deal with the subject before us tonight. I wish the Minister would start doing that.

Mr. Gow: The hon. Gentleman ought not to generate more indignation than he can conveniently contain.

I wish to refer briefly to some of the points raised during the debate. Then I shall come to the amendment moved by the hon. Lady. She asked whether we had paid our £250 million under the inter governmental agreement of 25 April 1985. No, we have not yet paid that instalment of £250 million, but we expect to so so shortly. I was also asked which other countries had paid their contributions under the IGA of 25 April 1985. Only one country, Greece, has paid, and only a small contribution. The hon. Lady asked when we expect to receive our abatement of £590 million in respect of 1984. We expect to receive that early in the new year.

The Opposition amendment is misleading at best or, to use the words which fell from the lips of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock, and Doon Valley, an example of deliberate obfuscation.

The assertion that Community farm spending shows a continued and uncontrolled increase is, mercifully, untrue, as the figures show. Agricultural market support grew by 27·6 per cent. in 1983, by 16·1 per cent. in 1984 and by 8·9 per cent. in 1985. For 1986, for the Community of 10, the draft budget provides for an increase of only 2·5 per cent. That is in fact a cut in real terms and it follows on from the last two annual price-fixing agreements, which have already cut price levels by 7 per cent. in real terms.

After including Spain and Portugal — I shall deal shortly with the subject of enlargement — spending on price support in the 1986 draft budget will increase by 5 per cent. in cash terms. That deceleration has not happened by accident. It stems directly from the Council's decision to impose budget discipline as agreed in December last year; 1986 is the first year in which that discipline applies and in which agricultural support spending for the Community of 10 is constrained to grow more slowly than the own resources base. This new constraint on agricultural spending is the result of a negotiation undertaken and persevered in by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Will the Minister agree that those commendable new restraints and limits can be exceeded by any amount in any year if the majority of member states decide that there have been exceptional or aberrant circumstances in the year in question?

Mr. Gow: Yes, it would be possible to make a change, but the Council of Ministers is now committed in the clearest and most unmistakeable terms to budget discipline, and it is the overriding purpose of Her Majesty's Government to ensure that that new strict budget discipline is enforced for 1986 and in the years following 1986.

The hon. Members for Thurrock, for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) all raised the question of food aid and famine relief, and

the hon. Member for Thurrock asked me to reply at length. I shall do as she asked because the Labour party, possibly not through accident, has chosen to misunderstand what has occurred.

The United Kingdom Government support wholeheartedly the provision of emergency food aid to combat famine. We want to ensure that that aid reaches those in need as rapidly as possible. We believe that famine relief must have priority within the Community's food aid programme. That is why the United Kingdom supported the Dublin Council's commitment in December of last year to make available emergency food aid of 1·2 million tonnes.

In June of this year, the Prime Minister joined other Heads of Government at the Milan European Council in recognising that new requirements for emergency food aid could arise during 1986 if the rains in Africa again proved insufficient. I have been charged, on 22 October and again this evening, with using the words "if the rains proved insufficient." They were not my words but the words of the European Council, from the Milan conclusions, and I shall read them to the House and notably to those who occupy the Opposition Front Bench:

"It felt, however, that new food aid requirements could arise if the rains, which had just started, on the Continent of Africa were again to be insufficient."

Those were the words of the Milan Council. On that basis, the European Council welcomed the Commission's proposals for a special reserve allocation which would make it possible to mobilise 500,000 tonnes of cereals equivalent in 1986 over and above the normal food aid programme. The Heads of Government invited development Ministers to examine the proposal.

In its preliminary draft budget for 1986 the Commission proposed a special reserve of 168 million ecu for this purpose in a chapter of the budget that was separate from the food aid chapter. The first Budget Council which met on 17 and 18 September had a preliminary discussion on the Commission's proposal. The Council decided not to include the proposed reserve in the draft budget at that stage but to defer a decision, pending discussion by the development Ministers and more up-to-date information about harvest prospects. The Budget Council resolved to review the matter at its next meeting. I was present at the council meeting on 18 September and supported this outcome, as did most of the other member states. The United Kingdom's position was shared by Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg and by that other Socialist state, dear to the hearts of the Opposition, France.

Since that first Budget Council nearly two months ago the harvest prospects in the worst affected countries have become much clearer. The special report issued by the Food and Agriculture Organisation earlier this month included the encouraging estimate that the total food aid needs of the countries concerned would be less than half of their 1984-85 level and that a considerable part of those needs could be covered from existing allocations which have not yet been delivered or distributed. The report emphasised that a number of countries would continue to need emergency food assistance during 1986.

The Community's Development Ministers met 10 days ago. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development represented the United Kingdom at that meeting where it was decided, without prejudging the precise budgetary treatment, that a reserve for emergency food aid during 1986 was necessary. My right hon. Friend agreed with that decision. The Budget Council will be considering the matter again on Tuesday week, in the light of the conclusions reached by the Development Ministers and by the European Assembly in its deliberations this week.

I was asked by the Opposition about the Government's policy at that Council. The United Kingdom will argue at the Council, as did my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development at the Development Council, that provision for emergency aid for famine relief should form part of the Community's total food aid programme and should be given priority within it.

In recent years the Community has increased substantially its provision for food aid generally. The provision for commitments in the 1984 budget was 502 million ecu, about £300 million. The provision for commitments in the 1985 budget reached an all-time high of 636 million ecu, about £375 million.

This is one of a series of debates about the Government's policy towards the European Community. The motion before the House supports our continued commitment to securing greater restraint in spending and greater equity in the Community's budgetary arrangements. I believe that there is a growing recognition both within and without the House that the Government's policy is achieving consistent success.

We have achieved two objectives which have eluded previous Governments. First, we have secured a lasting and automatic system for abatement of our excessive net contribution. Second, we have secured a commitment by the Council to budgetary discipline which, though not perfect, is an enormous improvement on what has gone before.

The Opposition's amendment is a smokescreen that is designed to camouflage their own past failure to secure the improvements which this Government have secured. I ask the House to reject the amendment and to vote for the motion.

Amendment negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 5874/85, Letter of amendment No. 3 to the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1985, 6378/85 and 6379/85, New Draft General Budget of the European Communities for 1985, 6882/85, the European Parliament's amendments and modifications to the New Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1985, 6907/85 to 6914/85, the Council's decisions on the European Parliament's amendments and proposed modifications to the New Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1985, 7882/85 and COM(85)325, Communication from the Commission concerning key figures for the 1986 Budget, COM(85)175, Preliminary Draft General Budget of the European Communities for 1986, COM(85)550, Letter of amendment to the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1986, 9336/85, Draft General Budget of the European Communities for 1986, and 8479/85, Proposal for a Council regulation on Community financing of expenditure incurred in respect of the supply of agricultural products as food aid; and supports the Government's continuing policy of seeking greater equity and restraint in the Community's budgetary arrangements.

Singleton Hospital (Casualty Unit)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

10 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I am not sure whether it is my reputation as a speaker or that of the Minister that has led to the rapid egress from the House. However, I am sure that we will have a more helpful and constructive discussion as a result of the more intimate atmosphere we are now enjoying.

The purpose of this debate is to focus attention on the unbelievable antics of a non-elected, non-repesentative, out-of-touch quango — the West Glamorgan health authority. It has put forward an absurd proposition to close the casualty unit at the hospital that is virtually in the centre of the city of Swansea, and to move it to the extreme outskirts.

There is massive opposition to that proposition. In addition to myself and the Labour party, the city council, the county council, the community health council, the Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital, the West Glamorgan local medical committee—on behalf of the local medical community — the representatives of some of the schools in the area, of women's and pensioners' organisations and the public, through an absolute flood of petitions, have made it absolutely clear —I hope beyond any doubt in the Minister's mind—that that proposition is utterly unacceptable to the people of Swansea.

What we have before us is a saga of contempt, arrogance and unbelievable incompetence. If we look back to the so-called phase of consultation, it is evident that the health authority has tried to shelter behind consultation that took place 10 years ago on a set of proposals that are unrecognisable when placed alongside its current proposition. A decade ago it was considering a proposal under which, in addition to facilities at the Morriston hospital, there would be minor facilities at the Singleton hospital—which it now intends to close—and at Neath.

In addition, there would have been a scattering of casualty facilities throughout the city, based on general practitioners' surgeries and health centres. That latter proposition, which was included in the initial proposal, has long since disappeared. Yet that same health authority is, incredibly, trying to base its defence of its untenable posture on consultation that included that scattering of subsidiary and supplementary casualty facilities.

By 1978 its proposals had already changed considerably, and at that stage it produced a planning cycle paper. However, in April 1984, in a letter to me, it made it quite clear that the question was not whether there should or should not be any facilities available at Singleton hospital. It stated in its letter that the issue in dispute was the "precise scale" of the facility that was to remain at Singleton.

The Under-Secretary of State wrote to me in December 1984 and his letter reflected the Department's understanding nine years after the initial consultation. The hon. Gentleman explained that he was confirming that the health authority intended as part of its strategic plan to provide a casualty service and to continue with an emergency admissions unit at the Singleton hospital.

That was not a trivial or frivolous proposition. It was understood by the Department nine years after the initial consultation that that was part of the strategic plan. I emphasise "strategic" because that implies that the range of facilities of medical support that would exist in the two hospitals had been taken into account when he proposition was advanced that some facility would be retained at Singleton. Until the end of last year the Department, like many others, understood, as the health authority appeared to understand itself, that there would remain a facility at Singleton.

When the community health council, representing the consumer in West Glamorgan, pressed for consultation, it was given a meeting as recently as 28 February, at which it was promised that the health authority was still trying to provide a service at Singleton and that the council would be consulted again once the authority had firm proposals to put forward. It is important to note that there was to be consultation on proposals and not notification of a decision already taken. However, from that day until 21 May the council heard nothing.

On 21 May, in an astonishing volte face — this was unrelated to any proposition put to the public, the community health council or public representatives —the authority announced the proposition to close the unit at Singleton hospital. In a letter of the same date, the council stated:

> "On the same day, the Authority released for mass distribution copies of a publicity leaflet which had been prepared prior to the meeting, advising the public of its decision. Promises of consultation with the community health council before decision was taken had not been kept."

It appears that there was contempt for the health council and for the other members of the authority. The leaflet had been prepared before the secret meeting that took place on 21 May at which the proposals of the chairman and chief executive were eventually endorses. The leaflets were circulated in anticipation that the decision would go the way that the leaders of the authority wanted.

When I and the community health council and others complained to the Welsh Office that it was unacceptable that after nine and a half years of consultation on one set of proposals the authority had announced a conclusion that was completely different, the Under-Secretary of State wrote me a letter similar to the one that he sent to the community health council. It contained the damning comment that

> "Ministers have taken the view that the health authority has not conformed with the normal procedures for public consultation on this issue."

That is a serious comment by a Minister about a quango whose members are his own appointees. After nine years of discussion, proposals and alleged consultation, the Minister has to admit that the normal procedures had not been observed in relation to the authority's final proposition. He went on to say—and I was grateful to him for this — that for that reason he was imposing another consultation period.

If the Minister wants to approve what the authority is suggesting, I give warning that I regard one month as inadequate. If I had the normal three-month period in which to organise opposition to the stronger and more disastrous proposal, I could ensure that the protestations that he heard about the original proposal would have been dwarfed by the representations that he would have received on the closure proposition.

That was not the end of the quango's contempt for the public and even the Department. Before the Secretary of State gave his decision, the local union had to veto an

attempt by the health authority to transfer porters from Singleton hospital casualty unit to Morriston. That was in anticipation of the closing of the Singleton unit, and despite the fact that at that stage the authority would have received no sign from the Minister and the Department of their intentions.

In the past 10 years, most of the population build-up in Swansea has been in the Singleton catchment area, and most accidents happen in the home. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the population most at risk is in the catchment area of the unit that the authority proposes to close. As a holiday area, it receives an enormous increase in population over the holiday period and, inevitably, most of the beach accidents also arise in the Singleton catchment area.

Another interesting feature is the incidence of road accidents. Statistics which are available to me, and which I understand were available to the health authority in Swansea, show that in 1973, of 710 road accidents, 508 occurred in areas with quicker access to the Singleton unit than to the Morriston one. Because of the build-up of traffic, inevitably travel conditions in the city have worsened.

Despite all these factors, the local authority is proposing the closure of the central unit and the taking of all cases to the peripheral unit on the east of the city at Morriston. If that were to happen, according to the ambulance timings carried out by the health authority for incidents in the west of Swansea an extra 20 minutes would be needed in the time that ambulances take to get to the casualty unit, and that does not take into account the rush hour or the holiday season. Anybody who has tried to get away from the beach area when the holidaymakers are going home in the early evening will confirm that it is virutally impossible to move on the main road.

In any event, the ear, nose and throat patients and the outpatients will be in the absurd position that they will be taken out to Morriston only to be taken back to Singleton where the correct facilities exist.

It is indicative that from 1968-72 Singleton brought up its accident patient throughput so rapidly that, although it had not been intended that it should have a major facility, by 1972 it was taking 80 per cent. of the cases and the Morriston unit was closed down. I am not suggesting that Morriston should not have a unit—I am delighted that, under this proposal, it will get the unit. The decision seems nonsense as all experience even before the build-up in population and the intensification of the rate of road traffic accidents shows that the majority of people would automatically go to Singleton hospital. Therefore, the case is proven.

I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will here and now reject utterly the proposition to close the Singleton unit, and that he will set up an inquiry into the eccentric activities of this peculiar West Glamorgan quango. Its antics have been a source of some hilarity, not just in relation to Singleton hospital. Its carousel activities in relation to Mount Pleasant hospital are equally bewildering, as was its posture on fluoridation, when the Minister had to veto its attempt to overrule the local authorities and me. The whole of its recent history suggests that there should be an inquiry into the way in which it seems so isolated from the community it serves.

If as a result of this absolute fiasco, which could be disastrous, the chairman and chief executive of the authority do not have the good grace to resign, I hope that the Secretary of State will sack them.

10.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): Although I share the concern of the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) about the way in which West Glamorgan health authority has handled this matter, I must make it clear that the transfer of major accident services to Morriston was approved by the previous Administration in 1977, and is not the issue now. If the right hon. Member has any complaints about that decision, I suggest that he directs them to the appropriate quarter of his own party. We are concerned only with the retention of a minor casualty unit, at Singleton.

For many years after the transfer of major accident services to Morriston was approved, the health authority was committed to the concept of continuing to provide a minor casualty unit at Singleton. In May of this year, the authority abandoned that commitment, and the matter soon landed on my right hon. Friend's desk. It falls to me to announce his decision, which I shall now do in the unavoidable absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Robinson), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, who is suffering from a viral infection. I shall then outline the background and events leading to that decision.

My right hon. Friend is not satisfied that the West Glamorgan health authority has fully explored all the avenues and options for providing a minor casualty service at Singleton hospital, and he is, therefore, not prepared to confirm West Glamorgan health authority's decision. The director of the NHS in Wales has today written to the health authority advising it of that. The Health authority is required to draw up plans within three months, and to negotiate with local general practitioners with a view to introducing a minor casualty service at Singleton to be run by the general practitioners under the overall supervision of an appropriate consultant. In formulating those plans and drawing up an operational policy, the health authority must consult informally all the appropriate local bodies, including the community health council, which must be kept fully in the picture.

My Department will keep in close contact with the health authority to see what progress is being made, and if at the end of three months the authority has failed to produce positive plans to open the unit it will be required to undertake public consultation on the issue and to publicise full details of the action that it has taken and the response of the general practitioners.

I can assure the right hon. Member and the people of Swansea that should the matter come before my right hon. Friend again he will require a great deal of convincing that the service should not be provided in accordance with the wishes that so many of the population have voiced.

Let us consider the background. In December 1975, the newly formed West Gilamorgan health authority published a consultative paper entitled "Planning a Comprehensive Health Service in West Glamorgan". Serious deficiencies in the accident department at Singleton were identified, and it was proposed that major accident services should be centralised at Morriston, where traumatic and orthopaedic services would be located. It stated that minor casualty

[Mr. Wyn Roberts]

services would be provided at Singleton and Neath. However, when this plan was approved by the previous Administration in April 1977, a note of caution was sounded and the authority was advised to consider further the casualty services to be provided at Singleton and Neath when the new accident and emergency unit at Morriston neared completion.

Notwithstanding this, year after year the authority's annual plans reiterated its commitment to the minor casualty service at Singleton. From 1978 to 1981, these plans contained a policy,

"that the Accident and Emergency services be organised on an Area basis, with the Major Traumatic Department sited at Morriston Hospital . . . but supported by the present Neath General Accident and Emergency services and a Casualty Unit at Singleton Hospital."

In 1982, that policy was,

"to identify the nature of the Casualty Services to be provided at Singleton Hospital after the completion of the Major Trauma Unit in Stage I of the Morriston Development."

In 1983, the authority published its draft strategic plan, which said that minor casualty services will continue at Clydach and Gorseinon, serviced by general practitioners, and that a similar provision at Singleton hospital will be considered. In the final plan which was submitted for the approval of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State late last year, the authority said that it,

"would continue to pursue the possibility of providing a casualty service at Singleton."

In view of the authority's earlier commitment to the provision of the service, it appears that it was generally accepted that the authority was continuing its earlier policies. If my right hon. Friend had any doubts in the matter, his fears would have been allayed by a statement referring to Singleton in the chief administrator's letter of 15 August 1984, which accompanied the submission of the plan, to the effect that the strategy expresses the intention of providing a minor casualty service that would support the full accident and emergency service at Neath and Morriston hospital.

Thus, the publication of the so-called final decision in May this year, to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, came as a bolt from the blue, and the good people of Swansea were understandably taken aback. In my Department, it was fairly assumed that consultation would take place, and when the strategic plan was approved in July reference was made to the need for consultation. However, following West Glamorgan's announcement in May, my Department received much correspondence alleging that, without consultation, the authority had reneged on its previous commitment to provide the unit. When in July the director of the NHS in Wales wrote to the general manager asking what consultation had taken place, the authority replied that it had not gone to public consultation because such an exercise would be a sham in the authority's view and it was unable to provide the service. This, of course, conflicted with established procedures laid down by the Department.

In the meantime, the authority's information sheet had raised a hue and cry in Swansea, and received much coverage by the media. Even if proper public consultation had taken place, I doubt whether the issue would have received a wider airing. The authority took considerable steps to publicise its decision. Some 5,000 copies of the leaflet were distributed in the city to health centres, general practitioner and dentists' surgeries, libraries, community, sports and leisure centres, political parties, Members of Parliament, post offices, education establishments, and so on.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West said in a recent letter to my right hon. Friend that in all his 21 years as a Member he had never come across a local proposal that had created such widespread anger and opposition. In view of all this and the fact that the authority was refusing to budge, there would have been little point in delaying the determination of the matter whilst it went through the full consultation process. The three-month public consultation exercise that Welsh health authorities are required to undertake goes beyond the statutory requirement contained in the Community Health Councils' Regulations 1985, which only require consultation with the community councils. The Department has extended consultation to involve other public bodies and their representatives and the general public. Detailed advice on our procedures is contained in service planning paper 5, of which there is a copy in the Library.

At the end of the day, if there is still local disagreement that cannot be resolved, the authority must refer the matter with recommendations and an outline of the alternative arrangements to my right hon. Friend for the final decision. A period of one month is then allowed, and publicly announced by the health authority for public representations to be made direct to my right hon. Friend. By forgoing formal consultation and by announcing the abandonment of the proposed casualty service at Singleton, West Glamorgan health authority would have precluded the submission of the proposals to my right hon. Friend, and the period of one month for the public to appeal to him. That was not acceptable to us, and for that reason the director of the NHS in Wales wrote to the general manager of West Glamorgan health authority on 12 September requiring him to put the authority's case formally to Ministers, and publicly to announce that it had done so while giving the public a further month to make their views known to my right hon. Friend.

That was done and the people of Swansea have not been reticent about making their feelings known. Indeed, we have been inundated, and I am satisfied that even in this case the time permitted for representations to be made was adequate for my right hon. Friend to judge the strength of local feeling.

My right hon. Friend considered the case put forward by the authority and the representations made. Of the 412 letters the Department received, only one was in support of the decision. Some of the letters included petitions and more than 7,000 names were collected.

Many of the objections we have received concern the greater length of time it will take people from certain areas of the city to reach Morriston instead of Singleton. However, accident and emergency services are best provided at Morriston where there is a wider range of back-up services available than at Singleton. These are to be enhanced in due course by the location of burns and plastic surgery services. This basic policy was, of course, fully endorsed by the previous Administration when they approved plans for Morriston, including the accident and emergency department.

In its submission the health authority has drawn comparisons with other cities and conurbations of similar size to Swansea that have only one accident and emergency department. It quoted Cardiff, Exeter,

Wolverhampton, Newport, Wrexham, Oxford and Bristol. I suggest, however, that Swansea is unusual in that its major accident services are located on the outskirts of the city. I appreciate that there could be difficulties for patients who are not severely injured in reaching Morriston under their own steam.

For the benefit of people who have only minor complaints, there is a strong case for providing a minor casualty unit at Singleton. The authority contends that to provide such a limited service at a major acute hospital is potentially dangerous because many conditions presented at the unit could not be treated because the particular specialties are at Morriston. However, any patient who cannot be treated properly at a minor casualty unit could, if necessary, be transported urgently by ambulance to Morriston.

The concept of a minor casualty unit serviced by general practitioners is well established. Such units are part of the accepted provision in a community hospital, and are also found in other small hospitals in areas that are some distance from major accident services. Indeed, West Glamorgan health authority itself has such units at Gorseinon and Clydach hospitals, and the latter is far closer to Morriston than is Singleton.

The health authority has said that funding the service is not a problem. I am glad that it takes that view, because my Department's funding of the running costs of the Morriston development was based on the premise that a minor casualty service was to be retained at Singleton.

The authority's submission shows that it has not given sufficient and detailed consideration to the feasibility of providing a service run by general practitioners. I note that the local medical committee, which represents general practitioners' interests to the health authority, has said that, although it supports the idea of a minor casualty unit, it should be staffed by consultants——

The Question having been proposed at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 15 November 1985

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Road Safety

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Mather.]*

9.35 am

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I am certain that the whole House welcomes the opportunity for the debate. May I give the House the apologies for absence of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, who is in Brussels. It was important that he should remain there to the end of the meeting because, among other issues, there is a discussion on European Road Safety Year.

I am glad to note that in the last few seconds the Chamber has filled up a little, and that those who are concerned with and are knowledgeable about the awful problems of road safety are now here. But it is sad that, whereas disasters capture the big headlines in the newspapers, as do statements and private notice questions on such matters, the fact that on average 15 people are killed on the roads every day of the year goes without mention. I know that it is Friday and I understand hon. Members' problems. When we are dealing with matters of disaster and blood and thunder they are in all the newspapers, but the daily tragedies, each affecting a single family, get only a small reference in the local newspaper.

The most avoidable way of dying is in a road accident, if only people can be persuaded to take greater care on the roads, whether they be on their feet or on wheels. I have spent considerable periods of my adult life in seeking to help disabled people. It is still a major part of my job at the Department of Transport, as well as one of my major personal interests. We are seeking to prevent disability and I shall go on seeking to do that in the Department, as well as helping those who have been affected by it.

Throughout Parliament there is much interest in the problem. There is rather less interest in the press, judging by the Press Gallery this morning. Nevertheless, I hope that the press will do the subject proud today, because we need to get through to those millions of people who let their minds wander when they are at the wheel of a lethal vehicle exactly how dangerous they may be.

There is much knowledge and expertise gathered here today, and I should like to pay credit to all the committees concerned with road safety. There is the all-party transport safety group, chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart), who is in his place today; the parliamentary advisory committee for transport safety, PACTS, with its joint chairmen, the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) and my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox); and, above all, the Select Committee on Transport. I should like to pay a tribute to the late Harry Cowans, who led that Committee so well. We miss him greatly, but we know that the new Chairman, the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Bagier), who I hope will join us today in our deliberations, will carry on the first-class work that is reflected in the report.

It would do every one good to read the Select Committee's report. It provides detailed analysis of virtually every aspect of road safety problems and contains over 40 recommendations. I have already made clear in our formal response how much the Government welcome the report. We wholeheartedly accept much of the analysis and the majority of the conclusions. The reaction to the report shows how deeply the House is committed to dealing with the problems. But do people outside the House realise that every week sees the equivalent of five jumbo jet loads of people killed and seriously injured on this country's roads? Such a toll demands urgent action, not just by the Government but by all of us.

Let us consider the size of the problem that we are facing. In 1984 the cost of road traffic accidents was 2,650 million wasted pounds. I say "cost" with due care because the cost of people being killed or injured is far greater than any monetary amount could ever mean. Yet casualties that year were at the second lowest figures, after 1983, since 1958, although traffic has increased by 158 per cent. since then. In 1984 there was a 4 per cent. increase in traffic and a 1 per cent. increase in the casualty rate per mile travelled compared with the previous year. We have got the number of deaths down from almost 8,000 in 1965 to 5,600 in 1984. We have got the pedestrian deaths down from 3,100 to 1,850. Casualties overall are down as well. However, we still have a major problem.

For every death on our motorways there are 29 on our other roads. Those are the ones that are so often forgotten, except by the family who are bereaved and the company that loses its key worker. We have problems with pedestrian fatalities. I am worried about the way in which child pedestrian and elderly pedestrian figures have risen, but since 1974 pedestrian casualties have fallen by 15 per cent.

Pedal cyclists also give rise to problems and concern. We must focus on the increase of 56 per cent. in pedal cycle traffic and 63 per cent. in casualties over the 10-uear period up to last year. We have got motor cycle casualties down, but that does not alter the fact that too many young men and women are still avoidably injured or killed.

I should like to refer to our general approach to road safety. In its report, the Select Committee rightly noted that, despite a large increase in the volume of traffic over the past decade or so, we have seen a substantial reduction in the number and severity of road casualties. There is no single reason for that, but a whole range of factors at work. We have much improved road systems, including our motorways. We have an increasingly stringent vehicle standards. We have legislation on drinking and driving. We have helmets for motor cyclists. We have increasing amount of local authority accident investigation and precention schemes. We have the green cross code for children and much input in the schools to help them.

In a few weeks the House will have a full opportunity to assess the contribution to safety made by car seat belts. We shall discuss whether compulsory wearing should be made permanent. That is a vital and separate issue, and deserves a debate of its own.

We can be encouraged by the progress that we have achieved so far and by the fact that the United Kingdom

[Mrs. Lynda Chalker]

shows up well in most international comparisons. However, I am not content to let things rest as they are, with the number of casualties and deaths on our roads, because I am convinced that we can do better.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): The House will know that nobody more than my hon. Friend deserves credit from both sides of the House for the interest that she is taking in the problem. A few months ago she gave me an affirmative answer to the following proposition: will she ensure that road safety and the rules for those who carry passengers on our roads are regulated by Parliament with exactly the same safety standards in mind as we have applied for well over 150 years to other forms of transport carrying fare-paying passengers? Does my hon. Friend accept that until we do that we shall not solve the problem?

Mrs. Chalker: I know my hon. Friend's concern about the matter. Where investigations are necessary, they are always carried out, but formalised systems are not always the quickest way of doing what my hon. Friend is asking for.

The Select Committee report has performed an important service. It presents four main worrying problems — the appalling rate at which young motor cyclists are still being killed or maimed; the intractable problem of drinking and driving; the rising trend in bicycle casualties; and the vulnerability of pedestrians, which is the only area in which the United Kingdom shows up badly in comparison with other countries. That is why the concern of millions of people throughout the country has increased. I know that from my postbag.

Concern has grown, yet the personal responsibility to correct the situation does not seem to have grown in tandem with it. The Department can deliver endless technical improvements, be it to the road or the vehicle, but only the will of people to change their behaviour will make a significant further difference in the reduction of casualties.

How will we best tackle those problems? The Government are already carrying out an internal review of road safety policy, which is a major undertaking involving all the relevant Government Departments. It is aimed at formulating a continuing programme of action to reduce road casualties now and over the next 10 years. We have not yet completed the review, but certain fundamental considerations are already clear.

Two matters are of crucial significance when it comes to selecting proposals for action. First, the proposals must, as far as possible, be based on thorough research and hard evidence, not supposition, not intuition and not anecdote. The research must not be used as an excuse for delay. However, I am in no doubt that the chances of making a real impact on road accident problems will increase in direct proportion to our detailed understanding of the problem and the likely effect of particular counter-measures. That is why the Transport and Road Research Laboratory is bringing together leading experts to take forward the long-term programme on behavioural research. We need to do much greater analysis of the factors at work in individual accidents. Without the hard facts and their analysis, we should simply go round in circles and not saving lives.

The second and even more important fact is working out measures to improve road safety. We must be in constant touch with the way in which ordinary people see the problems and how much support they will give to particular solutions. People want safer roads, but they also want personal mobility, and a great deal more of it. They want a choice of transport to meet their personal needs. They want to travel quickly and conveniently. They expect their goods and services to be delivered promptly. The question is how far those same people are willing to have those benefits curbed in the interests of greater road safety. That is the nub of the problem. We cannot assume that the answer they give will coincide with the views of the road safety professional or the road safety expert in the House of Commons—we have many of them.

It is clearer now than ever before that many, perhaps most, of the potential solutions to the problems of road casualties have a cost — much more than the purely financial cost. That cost involves some restriction on individual freedom. Some people will argue that the only way to reduce motor cycle casualties is to ban motor cycles, or at least to impose some draconian measures. Try telling that to the thousands of young people who value their bikes as an inexpensive passport to mobility and one that often allows them to take a job further from home than would otherwise be possible. We cannot hope to resolve these problems by imposing draconian measures. There is no simple answer. I firmly believe that we shall go much further if we take people along with us. If this involves regulation and restriction, we must clearly show people why it is in their interest to go along with that regulation and restriction.

The immediate priorities for action come from the road safety review, which is looking with a fairly long-term perspective at a wide area. A number of important developments are taking place in key areas. The first is in the law. As the first motor vehicle users had great faith in the law as an aid to road safety, it is not surprising that we look to the law again now. In practice, our present road traffic law has many critics. The courts regard it as over-complicated and badly structured; the police find it difficult to enforce; ordinary people feel that it is unfair and apparently capricious in its effects; and many wonder whether it is serving the cause of road safety in the best and most effective way. That is why the review by Dr. North and his colleagues is so important. It was established this year to examine the road traffic law to ascertain how far it can be improved in terms of simplicity, acceptability and effectiveness. That is a formidable task, not least because those criteria may not always be readily compatible with each other. I am sure that it is worth attempting. There has been unanimous approval from outside for the establishment of the review. I commend the comprehensive consultation document which was published at the end of July. It will be extremely important for all of those concerned with road safety to study that document and to offer their views.

The second area of immediate action is the publicity programme. The £3 million budget for road safety publicity is not as large as many would like, but it is a substantial outlay and, as with any marketing effort, it is what is done with it that is important. We want to ensure that we get the best possible return. This year we have introduced important changes. There is a new style of campaign. Instead of separate bursts of publicity scattered throughout the year, there is a rolling programme with changing themes designed to keep road safety continuously in the public eye. Hon. Members will have seen

the results of programme in posters on the streets and on the backs of buses with a coherent message at the bottom of the posters. "Be safe, be seen." is one example.

We are planning the publicity campaign in much closer partnership with local authorities, where appropriate, especially with police forces. They have a vital role to play in getting the message across at the local level. Police involvement is especially important in the forthcoming drink-driving publicity which will emphasise the firm police commitment to enforce the law against drunken drivers. That campaign will not be announced until December, but I assure the House that a great deal of hard work has gone into making that campaign hard hitting.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): Will the programme be based on my hon. Friend's immediate past campaign or on the campaigns in previous years stressing that drink should have no bearing on driving and driving no bearing on drink rather than on the razzmatazz marketing of "Stay low" which had a singular lack of success?

Mrs. Chalker: If my hon. Friend reads what I said a few moments ago, he will see that we have totally changed the basis of the publicity to a rolling programme with a different impact. I do not want to announce the campaign this morning, so I shall decline to take up my hon. Friend's provocative points. I assure him that it will be a hard-hitting campaign. The police have told me that they will be happy to co-operate in it to the utmost — *[Interruption.]* I shall not get involved in the private debate that is going on.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): Would bumper stickers on cars provided on a give-away basis by my hon. Friend's Department be effective pubicity, not least to deter motor cyclists from weaving inbetween moving vehicles?

Mrs. Chalker: I hope that in our desire to get the message across we shall not have too many messages in too many places. I am concerned that already many cars have far too much of their rear screens obliterated by stickers. If the notice was sufficiently large — for example, "Keep your distance", which is one of the campaign messages — and was given out to everyone, we might exacerbate the problem. We are working on the problem of motor cyclists who weave in and out of the traffic. If I can give my right hon. Friend more information soon, I shall do so.

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): Does the hon. Lady agree that the suggestion by the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) was rather fatuous because it would create a hazard? Any sticker limits the motorist's vision. If it is not big enough, it encourages the motorist behind to get closer, thereby creating further risks.

Mrs. Chalker: I am obviously reluctant to encourage the use of stickers on the backs of cars, because they distract people's concentration. It can also be counter-productive. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing, who has a fine record in these matters, commented on the way in which some motor cyclists weave in and out of traffic because he is as worried as I am. We are taking up that matter with the quick delivery firms to improve the situation.

This debate is important also with respect to vehicle standards. One of the main factors underlying improvements in road safety in recent years has been the process of making motor vehicles safer. That is going on all the time. The work is technical, it is relatively unspectacular and depends heavily on negotiation and agreement with international partners, but it is no less important for all that. The process covers virtually all vehicle types, from the smallest motor vehicles to the heaviest lorries. It ranges from immediate questions such as the fitting of rear seat belts in cars—we issued proposals for consultation on this matter and are now considering the responses—through to longer-term research on how vehicles can be designed to minimise pedestrian injuries if a pedestrian comes in contact with a vehicle.

Of topical interest is the package of coach safety measures, including the internationally agreed standards on roof strength, the proposals for seat belt on certain vulnerable seats, more emergency exits on double-deck coaches and specified standards of fire-retardant materials.

Local initiatives are another important aspect. I am afraid that, in discussions on the scope for further progress on road safety, attention always tends to focus on the role of central Government — on the need for further legislation and action directed from the centre and the need for national publicity. Of course those are all important issues which we must examine thoroughly. However, there is another approach to road safety, one which research by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory suggests may well assume increasing importance in our fight against death and maiming. This approach regards road safety not as a single national problem but as a series of local ones with micro rather than macro solutions. Indeed, the solutions are sometimes so micro that they involve no more than a change of road junction layout or the resiting of a pedestrian crossing.

For more than 10 years, local authorities have had a statutory duty to promote road safety. They are therefore involved in many activities. But none is more important than engineering for road safety. Local authorities' main tool is the accident investigation and prevention technique developed by my Department. It provides a rational framework for identifying hazards and removing them by small engineering works. AIP has already made an impact, but it still has a long way to go. I hope that more local authorities will be ready to take up that approach. There are worthwhile benefits to be had. Although the savings are still spread widely, they add up to a sizeable reduction in road accidents. Right hon. and hon. Members can help greatly in that process.

We all know of the problems associated with motorways as we all use them, but, in purely statistical terms, they are seven times safer then other roads. Moreover, for every motorway death, there are 29 on other roads. Hon. Members and the public are still worried about the recent serious motorway accidents. I have not yet received the final report on the terrible M6 crash, so we are not yet able to draw firm conclusions from it. We are all worried about the hazards that excessive speeds can cause in poor conditions. We know that only a minority of drivers exceed the speed limit, but they imperil the majority. There are perfectly safe stretches of motorway on which it is impossible to envisage an accident except for a momentary loss of concentration and speeding.

My Department's speed surveys have produced some hard facts to confirm our impressions. The last two show that a quarter of the coaches on motorways exceed 70 mph. When, two years ago, I challenged the Bus and Coach Council on the subject, it agreed to institute a code of

[Mrs. Chalker]

conduct which we all hoped would improve matters. It would have been better from every point of view if the industry had put its own house in order. I can give credit to the many responsible companies that have made strenuous efforts to introduce strict management controls necessary to conform with the code of conduct, and I should like to praise the great majority of responsible coach drivers who do not flout speed limits and give a first-class service to the travelling public, but they have been let down by an irresponsible minority.

It is simply no practical to police the motorways completely to deter that minority. To do that we should have to have a policeman every mile, which would take them away from other work. We have therefore been forced to consider general regulatory measures. The Liberal party has made it clear that it would impose a 60 mph limit on coaches and deny them the use of the outside lane on dual and three-lane motorways. The Government believe—my consultations with the Association of Chief Police Officers show it—that such restrictions could be counter-productive. By contrast with heavy goods vehicles, coaches are extremely manoeuvrable. They can move quickly—often too quickly—and safely from one lane to another if properly driven. We want to get at those who do not drive properly. If we confine coaches to the near-side or centre lane, we might add to the hazards caused by bunching and tail-gating, and anything that increases the likelihood of convoys is undesirable. We have all been in the centre lane overtaking a slow vehicle when a large vehicle comes up behind——

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): And intimidates us.

Mrs. Chalker: —that is exactly right—because it wants to get past.

Mr. Adley; Coaches do that all the time.

Mrs. Chalker: The same would happen if we restricted coaches to the centre and inside lanes. Private motorists would be pushed into the offside lane even if they did not want to be there, and they would be forced to exceed the speed limit. We must not create new problems for private motorists or adversely affect coach services. The solution must affect all coach operators, not just the responsible majority.

The right way to proceed is to enforce a 70 mph limit on coaches by requiring them to be fitted with speed governors that are sealed and made as tamper-proof as possible. Speed-limiting devices are already available and being tried by several coach operators. They can be set to regulate the flow of fuel so that engine assistance is cut out at a pre-set speed. My Department will start discussions with vehicle and equipment manufacturers and coach operators to develop this proposal and to work out at quickly as possible a timetable and a suitable technical specification the discussions will cover all relevant aspects of the devices, including their effectiveness at controlling maximum speeds accurately, their fail-safe characteristics and arrangements or making them completely tamper-proof. Such equipment would have later to be fitted to all public service vehicles that use motorways and are capable of more than 70 mph. We estimate that there are about 30,000 such vehicles. A programme will have to be worked out carefully in discussion with the industry. It will take some time, but my Department will make every effort to ensure that the discussions are sucessful. Such equipment will represent a considerable investment, but it is the only certain way to deal with the problem of speeding by a minority of coach drivers. If the matter is not put in order, we shall have to consider other measures.

Mr. Matthew Parris (Derbyshire, West): I congraulate my hon. Friend on this splendid proposal. It is not a new idea but something that she has worked on for the past three years. Three years ago we talked to her about the matter, since when she has had studies made. I am sure that her proposal will help greatly.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): Speed regulators are being used on coaches between London and Oxford, which is a frequent service. It is a proven technique. I also congratulate the Minister.

Mrs. Chalker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) and to the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross). This is the best way to proceed. It is important to make the governors tamper-proof. We now have far better governors, so it is right to consult on the matter.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): I have doubts about the efficacy of such a measure, for while it may control coach drivers who are tempted to do more than 70 mph, it will do nothing to solve the problem of coaches and other vehicles speeding in reduced speed limit conditions on motorways, such as in fog or contraflow situations. How does the hon. Lady intend to tackle that problem?

I was pleased that the hon. Lady said that only a minority of drivers were guilty of careless or reckless driving on motorways. She will agree that the vast majority of coach drivers do a good job, often in difficult conditions. Will she consider, as one other method of tackling the problem, taking action against firms whose drivers are repeatedly found speeding? Taking action against their employers would be one way to stop drivers speeding.

Mrs. Chalker: I am informed that speed governors are more effective than they were even a couple of years ago. They have improved greatly. The hon. Gentleman is right to say, as I said, that only a minority exceed the speed limit. However, they give everybody else a bad name and cause problems for all. I also have under consideration the question of operators, but I wish today to announce the first move, one which I hope will encourage coach operators, as it were, to put their own speeds in order.

Bad road conditions present us with a different situation. We must motivate not just coach drivers but all drivers to slow down, keep their distance and not tail-gate. One of the most dangerous actions in fog is for drivers to sit on the tail of the vehicle in front.

We have received the results of the fog study and are considering warning devices and other ways of supplying information about fog. The study carried out by the Meteorological Office to identify the more fog-prone lengths of the M25 is being discussed with the AA, RAC, road haulage organisations and others, and we shall make it generally available. We are determined to deal with the technical problem of getting the information across. However, we cannot, as the Government or as individual

hon. Members, deal with the need for drivers to take in that information and make the necessary changes in driving behaviour in bad conditions.

While recognising the anxiety that is felt about motorway accidents, I urge hon. Members to deal with the reality of the situation to which I referred at the outset. For every motorway death, there are 29 deaths on other roads. The challenge is to reduce that figure, too. However much attention the media may give to one horrific acccident, the fact remains that most casualties arise in circumstances that are not the stuff of big headlines in the national dailies —the pedestrian in a suburban street, the child knocked off his bike on the way to school, or the motor cycle and car in collision at an awkward junction. That type of everyday accident lies behind most of the casualty figures. We must deal with those matters also if we are to reduce the accident figures.

The solution may in many cases turn out to be just as unspectacular as the circumstances of accidents. At the local end, it may need nothing more than a new road alignment to give drivers better sight lines, the provision of a zebra crossing or traffic island or a modest scheme to reduce vehicle speeds in a residential area. At the other end of the scale, we may be referring to steady progress, for example, on better braking standards for motor cycles or the development of a pedestrian-friendly vehicle bumper or front.

All the evidence suggests that greater safety on roads will depend as much on that sort of activity, however humdrum and well outside the attention of the media, as on the headline-catching initiatives of central Government. I hope that the Transport Select Committee, which recognised that in its report, will be able to help us to do what every hon. Member wants to do, and that is to reduce the number of road accidents and the avoidable loss of life and maiming.

10.15 am

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I join the Minister in paying tribute to the former Chairman of the Transport Select Committee, Mr. Harry Cowans, who was not only a political colleague but a personal friend. Like me, and, coincidentally, the present Chairman of the Select Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Bagier), Harry Cowans was a railwayman until his election to this House, which made him one of a dwindling band. I know that I speak for hon. Members on both sides when I say that he will be sorely and sadly missed and that his tragic and early death has robbed the House of a fine friend and colleague and a great parliamentarian.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South for his able chairmanship of the Select Committee and, indeed, for initiating this debate, for I understand that his letter was responsible for the debate being staged. Many of the Committee's recommendations are, and will prove to be, valuable in the framing of future legislation.

Road safety is an issue that we debate infrequently— I cannot recall when we last had a debate on the subject —yet the appalling tragedy of the 5,500 road deaths anually has been brought home to me in a personal way on two occasions this year. First, I attended a meeting at a school in my constituency two weeks ago in connection with a road on which there had been two tragic accidents in recent months. Secondly, in the terrible accident on the M6, to which the Minister referred, a political colleague and former agent of mine in a local government election and his wife were killed. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have a duty—because this is not a party political subject—to do all they can to tackle the appalling problem of road deaths.

I will pick out a few of the Select Committee's recommendations and examine the Government's response to them to see, first, whether the recommendations are correct in the view of most hon. Members and, secondly, whether the response of the Government is adequate. Recommendation (iii) states:

"The Department should give further consideration to the suggestion of the Association of Chief Police Officers for a somewhat longer test which includes a section of dual carriageway driving."

It is clear that, whatever the response of the Department, it must be concerned about cost. It would be hypocritical of us not to bear that aspect in mind, because inevitably a longer driving test which met the requirements of the Select Committee would lead to the recruitment of more driving instructors and, therefore, place an additional financial burden on the Department. Nevertheless—I express a personal view—I hope that hon. Members will agree that the present driving test is not adequate.

The driving test was devised about 50 years ago. It has changed little over the years, although road conditions have drastically altered. Perhaps it is simply that I am getting older, but driving seems to become more of a strain as the years go by. The fact that the driving test has remained largely unchanged probably lies behind the Committee's recommendation. I agree that a driving test around the back streets of an urban area which qualifies people to drive on dual carriageways and motorways is, in this day and age, undesirable and inadequate.

The Minister mentioned tail-gating on motorways. Like her, I use the motorways frequently. I think that some of the greatest menaces on Britain's motorways do not speed but meander at 50 mph in the middle lane. Although we must all be worried about the speed of heavy goods vehicles and coaches, I cannot but sympathise with professional drivers, particularly of heavy goods vehicles which are confined to the two left-hand lanes, who are frustrated by the meanderers.

Perhaps the Department will consider launching a campaign to convince people who hog the centre lane that the left-hand lane not the slow lane but the lane on which we should all drive when it is clear. Unless a publicity campaign is launched, the drivers of heavy goods vehicles will continue to be frustrated and this will continue to be reflected in their driving habits. A change in the driving test would be valuable, although I appreciate that it would cost money.

The Select Committee's recommendation (v) states:

"The Department of Transport, in association with RoSPA and the Institute of Advanced Motorists, should give serious thought to methods of increasing the popularity of advanced driving tests."

The Department could play a part by urging motorists to test their own driving standards. That could help to eradicate the bad habits that we are all inclined to acquire over the years.

Recommendation (vi) concerns the standard of motor cycle instruction. More research is needed. For many young people the first opportunity for personal mobility is the acquisition of a motor cycle. In my day it was possible

[Mr. Peter Snape]

to ride a motor cycle at the age of 16, but the experience of hitting the ground on a couple of occasions soon cured me of that enthusiasm. Of course, we deplore bad riding, particularly in our cities by those who work for delivery companies. Many such motor cyclists appear to care little for their own lives and limbs. More research is needed into whether it would be useful for more continuous training to be given to young motor cyclists when they first acquire their machines.

Recommendation (xi) states:

"The minimum legal standards of lighting for bicycles should be strictly enforced by the police."

The police appear to regard stopping people riding bicycles without lights as being beneath them. The police often take no action against people riding without lights. We have debated cyclists' problems in the House and in the Select Committee. A small minority of cyclists appear to believe that none of the rules of the road applies to them. They rarely stop at traffic lights, they never stop at pedestrian crossings, and sometimes they knock down hon. Members. The Select Committee is right to highlight the problem.

I wish that Select Committees would drop the habit of using roman numerals for their recommendations. I find the instant translations extremely difficult. However, recommendation (xv) states:

"The threshold blood alcohol level for identifying drivers who are potentially suffering from a drinking problem should be re-examined at an early stage."

The Department should re-examine the recommendations of the Blennerhasset committee. Public opinion generally is not in favour of random breath tests, but the present law needs to be re-examined if we are to tackle that severe problem.

Recommendation (xix) states:

"For a trial period the motorway speed limit should be raised to 80 mph."

I am sure that the majority of hon. Members will agree with the Department and resist that proposal. Some motoring fanatics appear to believe that, because motor cars are designed to travel much faster than the present legal speed limit, the limit should be raised. There is a problem of enforcement. I should be less than honest—and nobody would believe me anyway—if I said that I never break the speed limit. However, the best deterrent is a visible police presence. I accept that it is impossible for policemen to be posted at one mile intervals, yet it appears to be impossible to have a police presence for every 50 miles of motorway.

With the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) I appeared on a Thames Television programme a couple of weeks ago when a senior police officer warned that, because of financial restrictions, he was unable properly to police sections of the M25, which is likely to be one of the busiest motorways in Europe. Although it is obviously desirable to have a properly paid police force, that is not much use if financial restrictions prevent the police from doing their job properly. The sight of a police Land-rover on a hump at the side of a motorway brings about a remarkable improvement in driving standards, which falls away over the next two or three miles once it is apparent that the vehicle is remaining stationary rather than chasing speeding motorists.

Mr. Parris: The point of a police Land-rover in iridescent dayglow orange is that it slows everyone down until it is out of sight again. I have never understood why a police presence is best made visible. Why are there no invisible speed traps on motorways? Surely it is better for people to know that at any point there might be a police speed trap.

Mr. Snape: The best deterrent to bad and illegal driving is a visible police presence. The humps at the side of the motorways are a good idea. A police vehicle, even when stationary, has a salutary effect on speeding drivers and those who weave from lane to lane. I am glad that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. Parris) approves of iridescent dayglow red or orange. Perhaps his Labour opponent will take the tip and print his posters for the next general election in iridescent dayglow red. It is not necessarily unmarked police cars that are needed on motorways, but more a marked and obvious police presence. The purpose is deterrence rather than convictions. I think that I take both sides of the House with me when I say that a police presence is what is required.

The Select Committee makes the fairly controversial recommendation to raise the speed limit to 80 mph. I think that most people know that it is unlikely that the police will proceed against motorists who exceed the speed limit by up to 10 mph. Therefore, 80 mph will soon become 90. There is a speedometer calibration problem — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) seems to take these matters as fit subjects for some levity. He knows very well that 80 mph would be semi-automatically exceeded by a large proportion of motorists because of the problems of speedometer calibration. Motorists know that they are unlikely to be prosecuted for speeds of up to 10 mph over the legal limit. For that reason, the recommendation of the Select Committee ought to be resisted.

There might also be a case for reconsidering speed limits in urban areas. I do not think that a blanket 30 mph in this day and age is necessarily correct. There might be cases, particularly on housing estates, where a speed of 20 mph might be more appropriate. In various countries, 30 mph is seen as being too fast for housing areas. I agree that there would be a problem of enforcement, and for that reason alone I should have thought that the police would resist such a measure.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that a multiplicity of speed limits would be even more confusing for the motorist? What we need to do—and I am delighted to hear him say it—is to deter, rather than punish, the motorist who breaks the law. If the law is too complicated, the tendency is for more motorists to break it.

Mr. Snape: I concede that that is a relevant point, but we already have a multiplicity of speed limits. We have 30, 40, 50, 60 and 70 mph, so I do not necessarily agree with the hon. Gentleman that a lower speed limit would be more confusing. I am not suggesting that we apply such a limit overnight, but I am asking the Department to look into these matters, because I am not sure — I am speaking personally—that a blanket 30 mph is the right limit for all our urban areas.

I think that both sides of the House will welcome the Minister's announcement about the fitting of speed limiters to public service vehicles. I do not know why we stop there. There is a good case for fitting speed limiters to heavy goods vehicles, because a minority—I stress a

minority—of heavy goods vehicle drivers move from lane to lane either without signalling or after signalling at the last moment, and harass motorists in front of them by the practice of tail-gating. Some HGV drivers have a habit of accelerating to close the gap between themselves and the vehicle in front if they see a private car approaching on the outside. Many of them drive in convoys. I can understand that drivers who work for the same company like to meet and chat and stay close to one another, but I do not see that it is necessary for them to do so when they are driving, particularly when being close to one another means, in some cases, leaving only six or eight feet between the rear of one lorry and the bonnet of another.

I am familiar with the argument of the road haulage industry about the fitting of speed limiters to heavy goods vehicles. It would say that more research is needed. The road lobby generally is extremely effective in its propaganda. It was Max Hastings in *The London Standard* —he is no Left-winger—who referred to the "detestable road lobby". I would not go that far, because I do not want to disturb the comparative tranquillity of our debate, but that lobby has been effective in resisting most measures over the years. It has resisted principally on the ground of cost, but quite often on the ground that more research is needed.

It is more than 20 years since I drove a 10-ton AEC lorry during my Army days. It was fitted with a speed limiter which limited the speed to 28 mph. That was frustrating for a youthful tearaway, as I was in those days.

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman still is.

Mr. Snape: I am flattered that the hon. Lady still thinks that I am. I fear that that is the least accurate remark that she has made today.

The speed limiter worked well in the 1960s, and I cannot understand the view of the road lobby that more research is needed before the device can be fitted. While welcoming what the hon. Lady has said, I do not believe that she has gone far enough. There is a good argument for the use of such limiters in heavy goods vehicles.

In 1983, the last full year for which figures are available, heavy goods vehicles were involved in 13,504 accidents involving personal injury. We all know that for a car driver an impact with a heavy goods vehicle is likely to be serious, if not fatal. For that reason alone, we should do more about such vehicles.

It has been a deliberate act of policy by the Government to bring about the proliferation of heavy lorries. They have twice increased the weight limits, and I confidently predict that there will be another attempt to increase lorry weight from the present 38-tonne limit in the near future. They have once increased lorry speeds, because the then Secretary of State said that the speed limits were unenforceable. Again, we are back to deterrence and enforcement. I believe that both for lorries and for public service vehicles, Britain is less stringent in the application of the laws than most other countries in the world.

With or without the speed limiter, the scheduled timetable for a National Bus rapide coach from Manchester to London is three hours 45 minutes. Such a timetable is unrealistic. I used to live in the Manchester area. It is almost 200 miles from London to Manchester via the motorway. A time of three hours 45 minutes for a public service vehicle over 200 miles is not just an ecouragement to exceed the present 70 mph speed limit, but I cannot see any other way that such a schedule could be met, especially when one considers the heavy traffic before joining the motorway and after leaving the M1. The Department should look at coach timetables, particularly since the spread of rapide services which are deliberately designed to compete with their main long-distance competitors, British Rail's inter-city services. I make no complaint about that, but I also stress, and I think that the House will agree, that that competition must not be at the expense of law-breaking or the endangerment to life caused by such timetabling.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall be taking up that matter in my discussions with the coach operators. Over-tight timetabling produces pressures on drivers and obviously the operators must consider that problem.

Mr. Snape: I am grateful for that assurance.

Recommendation (xxiv) says:

"A national campaign should be undertaken to encourage respect for highway law and order."

We are back to the problem of enforcement. The Department artfully concentrated on paragraph 118 of the Select Committee report and referred to an nationwide publicity campaign. The Department said:

"The Committee's suggestion of a campaign on the general subject of respect for road traffic law is one that will be carefully examined in the context of this strategy."

That was a reference to the new strategy for road safety publicity being developed by the Department.

Paragraph 119 of the Committee's report spoke about the need to devote more police resources to the enforcement of road traffic law. I hope that the Minister of State will consider that aspect.

Recommendation (xxxi) said:

"In view of the large number of accidents involving pedestrians, the highest priority should be given to research into ways of modifying the front of vehicles in order to mitigate the severity of injuries to pedestrians."

I know that the Department is concerned about that matter. Perhaps the Minister will tell us what stage the Department and the Transport and Road Research Laboratory have reached in their work on the redesigning of the front of vehicles to mitigate injuries to pedestrians.

While talking about the TRRL, I ought to point out that we are in danger of treating that body, which was always regarded as an independent research organisation, as another arm of the Department. Over the past decade, the number of staff at the TRRL has been reduced by about 50 per cent. If we are serious about tackling the problems of road deaths and injuries, that is not the way to proceed.

Recommendation (xxxiii) says:

"The Department of Transport should introduce legislation requiring motor cyclists to use their headlights or running lights during the hours of daylight."

The Opposition have fully supported Government action on motor cycle safety in recent years. There are legitimate worries about personal freedom, as there were when, fo example, motor cyclists were compelled to wear crash helmets. The late Fred Hill thought that that was a matter worth going to prison for. I disagreed with him and told him so frequently in an acrimonious exchange of correspondence, but I admired his spirit and the principle behind his view, though it was misguided, to say the least.

The Department replied to the Select Committee:

"the Government recognises the wrong feelings of many riders that the use of such aids should be left to the decision of the individual."

None of us believes in the infallibility of opinion polls —particularly recent polls—but I understand that, in an

[Mr. Snape]

admittedly small sample, 75 per cent. of motor cyclists said that they used headlights. The fact that they recognise that the use of headlights contributes to safety is a legitimate argument for compulsion. As a car driver, I find it much easier to see motor cyclists during the day when their headlights are on than I do when they ride without lights on adark and drizzly day. Pedestrians also find it easier to see motor cyclists when their headlights are on.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the growing trend for motor cycles to have two headlights is dangerous? Motor cycles are often deceptive at night; car drivers see two headlights approaching and do not know what sort of vehicle is coming towards them.

Mr. Snape: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I hope that he agrees with me that the use of undipped headlights, particularly at dusk, is almost as dangerous as a motor cyclist having no light. I should be grateful if motor cyclists would remember to dip their headlights.

Recommendation (xxxv) says:

"The Department of Transport should, within the existing grant mechanisms provide additional financial support to local authorities which wish to develop and expand their programmes of Accident Investigation and Prevention schemes."

The Minister of State referred to the value of local initiatives. Perhaps a certain proportion of transport supplementary grants and transport policies and plans grants should be used for local initiatives. There are many comparatively cheap and cost-effective local schemes which could be implemented if money were available and which would help to prevent accidents and save lives.

I do not wish to inject a note of political controversy into the debate, but we ought to have an assurance that the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils will not break up the countywide expertise that has been acquired over many years. It would be sad if individual local authorities changed their policies or acted differently from neighbouring authorities.

Recommendation (xxxviii) says:

"All new motorways should be fitted with overhead lighting as a matter of routine."

There was an exchange during Department of Transport Quesion Time on Monday about the desirability of lighting the M25. I am sure that all hon. Members agree that driving at night is much easier when motorways are lit. I know that lighting costs money, but, certainly during the initial building, it is a marginal cost in the £2 million per mile cost of motorway.

We were not given much encouragement by the Secretary of State on Monday about lighting all the M25, but it would be useful to know whether lighting ducts have been provided on that motorway. That would at least enable lighting to be installed comparatively cheaply in the future. I hope that lighting ducts will be provided on all new motorways, even if it is not thought necessary to install lighting from the start.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South and his Committee for their invaluable report, which I am sure will enable us to have a valuable debate.

10.50 am

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I welcome the warm introduction that my hon. Friend the Minister of State gave to the debate, her dedication to the pursuit of road safety and the spirit on both sides of the House, which is reflected in the way in which the debate has been conducted so far. I hope that we can continue with the same degree of friendship.

I welcome the more stringent requirements for professional driving instructors which came into force on 20 May. It is vital that learner drivers should be taught correctly and given a firm foundation for a lifetime of safe driving. However, the recent legislation is inadequate. The only noteworthy difference is the introduction of 40 hours of compulsory training for new instructors. The power to introduce that was provided in the Road Traffic (Driving Instruction) Act 1967. Our requirements must be compared with 770 hours of compulsory training for instructors and a further 370 hours for a driving school principal in Europe Initiative for Road Safety. Britain has pitifully low standards. The basic error may well have been to register instructors rather than driving schools. Multi-car units would be much easier to supervise.

I agree that the Department works hard to discourage test-route coaching and expects the teaching of driving subjects that are not in the present test. To my knowledge, it has been doing so since the April 1968 issue of the ADI news bulletin, so that is not exactly news. Is not the Department yet ready to concede that that approach has not worked? The reason is simple. Most pupils go to a driving school to obtain a driving licence and not to learn to drive. The majority of instructors take the view that it is their duty to their pupils to obtain a licence for them at the lowest possible cost; hence they teach the minimum that is needed to pass the test under favourable conditions. The conscientious instructor suffers the commercial disadvantage that his pupils need more lessons and consequently his reputation suffers. Where is the reward for being diligent and conscientious?

I agree with my hon. Friend the Minister of State that standards in the test will be a major determinant in the content and quality of instruction. Would not a better approach to night driving, for example, be the one that has been operating so successfully in Norway, as reported in the OECD guidelines for driving instruction? The Japanese achieved a 50 per cent. improvement in the level of road casualties by changing the system of driver training and testing and not, as the Department suggested, by changing the way in which they collected statistics.

I do not think that anyone is saying that the present driving test is too easy. We should be concerned to ensure, however, that the right 48 per cent. pass the test. There are differing opinions on this issue, but there is no hard evidence that the test is being passed by the right 48 per cent. The only scientific evidence on the subject is contained in document LR869 of the Transport and Road Research Laboratory, which suggests otherwise.

I suggest that the task of driving four components: information-gathering and processing skills, manipulative skills, knowledge and attitude. Each component is equally important in the make-up of a safe and considerate driver. The second component—manipulative skills—can be tested only as it is at present. However, a practical on-the-road test has glaringly obvious limitations in assessing the other components, as shown in the OECD Guidelines for driver instruction.

Knowledge and attitude and, to a large extent, information-gathering and processing skills could be tested on a consistent degree by a preliminary off-the-road test. The fact that some people drive differently after

passing the test is an attitudinal problem which can and must be overcome by effective psychology. Implementation of the guidelines for driving instruction and Europe Initiative for Road Safety could have a greater impact in reducing road casualties than all the legislation which has been introduced over the past decade.

In the key time after passing the test the motorist still lacks experience. Other road users are not aware of how recently he has passed his test. It is helpful to display an approprate sign. I suggest that the L plate with a diagonal line across it should be displayed for the 12 months following the passing of the test. Northern Ireland has a probationary plate and other countries have plates that similarly help both the new driver and other motorists. I commend that scheme to my hon. Friend.

A further aid to road safety is the Royal Automobile Club's call that motorists should fit fire extinguishers and first-aid kits as standard equipment. If we are to give that legislative teeth, I suggest that my hon. Friend makes their provision a condition in the production and retailing of new cars and that they should be two items to be checked at the time of the MOT examination. Too few motorists are adequately equipped if they come across an emergency on the road. Time is critical in such conditions if lives are to be saved. Is the cost of a fire extinguisher and a first-aid kit too high a price to pay for equipment that may save a life?

Government statistics showed that tyres had a major causal effect in 60 per cent. of 3,857 accidents over a 12-month period. It is worrying that thousands of used car tyres are being imported from other EEC states, especially West Germany, where the law on tyre tread depth is much more stringent than in Britain.

The *Yorkshire Post* has taken the initiative to undertake some research and has purchased second-hand tyres and arranged for them to be tested by an independent expert. It was found that 30 per cent. of the tyres were illegal and that a further 30 per cent. were in such a poor condition that they should have been scrapped. Motorists should beware of bargain-basement offers. However, we must not leave the matter solely to the consumer.

Why have double standards for road safety in Europe? There is a mushrooming trade in the import of tyre casings. Last year 440,649 came into the United Kingdom at an average cost of only £1·73 a time. A major importer has said that the trade will continue and will endanger life on the road until the law is made more stringent. A licensing system may be appropriate, and I ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State to discuss the matter at the European Council of Ministers with a view to introducing tough and effective regulations to cover substandard tyres.

There is an urgent need for the netting of moveable loads. In my constituency there is the most northerly sugarbeet processing factory in Britain, and I am delighted at the employment that it creates in the industry in the north of England, but children, pedestrians generally, cyclists and all road users come into danger from moveable loads. If the lorry has to brake or turn abruptly, the beet falls off. There are many examples in the streets of York, Bury St. Edmunds and other areas where there are sugarbeet factories that show clearly that the present legislation is inadequate. It would be a simple piece of legislation that required the netting of moveable loads, and I ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State to enact it rather than obtaining further statistics.

There is a need for legislation on our motorways. Britain must be one of the few countries that sets such great store by advisory elements rather than legislation. The real madness on our motorways is that we have a 1,000, mile system of roads for high-speed traffic without mandatory signalling. The costly electronic matrix gantries and the antique yellow flashing lights simply advise drivers to reduce their speed; they are not enforceable in law. As a result, few motorists pay any attention to them.

Our advisory system is practically unique. In Germany, drivers obey immediately the speed limit that is posted. West German police are tough on drivers who flout a posted limit. In the United States, the freeways and turnpikes have signal boxes at frequent intervals. Even the absurdly low 55 mph limit can be changed instantly and enforced.

The Department says that the advisory speed limits on our motorways could not be made mandatory because

"the police simply could not enforce them."

That is ridiculous. By and large, the British are law-abiding people — and that has been proved by the widespread wearing of seat belts. They will obey if they must. Equally, they are notoriously bad at taking advice. leave my hon. Friend the Minister of State to pick up the cue that I have given her.

10.59 am

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): I should like to congratulate the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) on putting forward such sensible suggestions. I recall my early days—long before those mentioned by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape)—when I went to work on a BSA Bantam. I passed a sugar-beet factory at Kidderminster. I had a great many pigs at that time, so I would stop and pick up the sugar-beet to feed to the pigs. However, I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there are far too many sugar-beet lying around on our roads at this time of year. They are dangerous. When one is riding a motor cycle in fog, they can cause accidents.

I feel slightly embarrassed by being called to speak before the Chairman of the Select Committee is given the floor, because, although I am a member of the Select Committee on Transport, was not a member when these investigations into road safety started. I joined the Committee approxiamtely half way through its proceedings and I have not heard all the evidence that was given to my colleagues. I therefore wish to limit my remarks to six of the recommendations.

I pay tribute, as has rightly already been done, to our former Chairman, Mr. Harry Cowans, who unfortunately passed away during the recess. I had enormous respect for him. He was a good friend to all of us. I should like also to pay tribute to the Minister, because I know that she cares deeply about road safety and is doing everything that she can to improve matters.

The Select Committee's recommendation to raise the motorway speed limit to 80 mph was probably wrong. I checked that I did not vote for the measure, and found that I was not present at the time. The Department was probably right to turn down that recommendation. It was put forward because of the inability of the police to enforce the current 70 mph limit. The good briefing material that has been sent to us, for which I am grateful, tells us that at any one time no less than 40 per cent. of cars exceed

[Mr. Stephen Ross]

the speed limit and about 15 per cent. travel at speeds of 80 mph or above. That was given in evidence to the Committee.

Statistics undoubtedly show that higher speeds lead to more serious accidents. That is the crucial statistic of which the House should take notice and to which it should give priority. It is, however, important that existing limits should be more strictly enforced. That point has already been brought out. I can only repeat that I agree that more patrolmen are needed on our motorways if we are serious about implementing the 70 mph limit. I also agree with the introduction of some type of speed limiting device, as mentioned in recommendation (xxi).

I congratulate the Minister—she shot my fox on this one, because I was going to have a real go about it—on announcing that she intends to introduce some form of speed limiting device on coaches. I have had some correspondence, which has probably been mentioned in the other place, from Mr. Lucas of Merton college, Oxford. The hon. Lady has plainly had the letter. He feels strongly that we should do the same with lorries. He suggests that we could modify the tachographs so that a vehicle could not exceed a predetermined speed limit, which could vary between 30 and 50 mph. Some lights would flash and the horn sound intermittently if the limit were exceeded. I believe that that proposal could be made to work. It would be a simple device attached to the bumper. I recognise the point made by the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins). A light would go on showing the speed limit. Mr. Lucas sets out four offences in some detail.

I am aware that the hon. Lady must be getting scared. She has already heard a speech from the hon. Member for York who suggested a load of new legislation. I do not want to add to her burden by suggesting four more offences, but I draw her attention to the letter. The suggestion should be considered when she is discussing the fixing of a gadget to coaches and, I hope, to lorries to stop them exceeding speed limits.

Recommendations (xvii) and (xxiii) relate to dangerous parking. They call for an increase in the number of traffic wardens. I am a little nervous about that proposal, but it is probably true that we should have more traffic wardens and that more off-street parking should be provided. More positive action should be taken to enable motorists to park legally. I have been trying to persuade my county council, which has a car park almost opposite my house in the Isle of Wight, not to have notices up all the time saying that people cannot park without a permit. Their employees are working only five days a week, so why cannot the county council say that the parking is free at weekends and allow everyone to park there? We put unnecessarily forbidding notices on parking places. Local authorities are especially guilty of that. They put visitors off, and they therefore park where we would rather they did not and block the roads. Local authorities could do a great deal more to provide extra parking facilities.

Too many cars are being parked on pavements. They not only block the pavements and cause problems for the elderly and the disabled; they damage the paving stones and cost the ratepayers money. I have had representations made to me by the Cowes Retired Pensioners Association on the Isle of Wight. It says that blind people, or people with poor sight, are often inconvenienced. Cars parked on pavements restrict the visibility of people trying to cross the road. Pedestrians should receive rather more consideration.

I must remind the House of the statistics that the Committee was given about pedestrian casualties. They are worrying. There were 1,783 pedestrians killed or seriously injured in 1957. By 1981 that figure had increased to 4,733. That is an increase of 2,950, or 165 per cent. We must look after pedestrians' interest rather more than we have done in the past.

Before the war, when we were building roads in Worcestershire we put cycle tracks down the sides. Unfortunately, many of them have fallen into disuse. The call is now for more cycle tracks. Forward-looking authorities were providing them in the 1930s when the land was available. Unfortunately, they did not maintain them in the 1950s and 1960s when cycling was not as popular as it now is.

We must try to give cyclists more room. They should be able to use cycle tracks. When I walk to work I watch some of my colleagues from the House riding their bicycles. I have a great admiration for them. They are extremely brave. It frightens me to death to see them weaving in and out of coaches and lorries along the Embankment.

Recommendations (xxxviii) and (xxxix) relate to better lighting on our motorways. The statistics that we have all been given show that lighting reduces casualties substantially. I therefore echo the words expressed by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East. We should do our best to complete the lighting of our motorways. It is sensible to install lighting ducts when new motorways are being built.

I am in favour of motor cyclists using their headlights during daylight. That is referred to in recommendation (xxxiii). It would make them more clearly visible to other road users. I regret the fact that the Government have rejected that recommendation on the ground that such a matter should be left to the decision of the individual. I believe that it should be made compulsory. I have received letters from motor cyclists pressing me to keep raising the matter in the House.

The logic of the Government's position is faulty. Some people may argue that the use of an aid to save one's own life should be left to one's own judgment, but the object of having a light on a motor cycle is to enable other road users, including pedestrians, to avoid accidents. It should not be left to the motor cyclist's judgment as to whether he gives warning of his approach.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Has the hon. Gentleman read the work of the Transport and Road Research Laboratory on this subject and noted that the benefits do not apply to all motor cyclists? They do not apply necessarily to all low-powered motor cycles and all circumstances.

Mr. Ross: I have read some of the work. I understand that there are problems with some of the lower powered bikes, especially with batteries, but I gather that that can be overcome. If more research is needed, let us, for heaven's sake, get on with it. About 70 per cent. of motor cyclists already ride with lights one.

There should be more road safety sub-committees to monitor the work of road safety officers, which most authorities have. They should include members of the

general public who have a particular interest in the subject. To complement that, far too many small details of road safety continue to be left to central diktat—I welcome the Minister's remark that local authorities should use their initiative more — but she must make the necessary changes herself. We should consider present legislation, for example, on pelican crossings. We require local councils to put all sorts of statistics to the Department if they seek variations in such matters. Surely it is sensible to allow local variations so that, in areas where many elderly people cross a road, time limits on pelican crossings can be increased. Other issues could also be decided at local level to a greater degree than at present.

When accidents occur in rail, sea or air transport there are thorough formal inquiries, and recommendations are published which aim at preventing a recurrence. No one would countenance operators failing to correct dangers that have been revealed. That is in stark contrast to the somewhat apathetic approach to road safety. Recently we have been concerned about lapses in air safety. In 1984, 224 people were killed in air accidents worldwide, whereas more than 40,000 people lost their lives in road accidents in Europe alone. That excites too little interest, and I recognise that the Minister mentioned that in her speech. We must, therefore, change attitudes, and I have two suggestions to make.

First, the investigation of road accidents concentrates too much on the legalistic approach of securing prosecution and compensation. Will the Minister consider establishing an independent inspectorate charged with accident prevention, with powers of investigation similar to those of other transport inspectorates and without their somewhat laborious procedures? Independent examination of even a sample of accidents would certainly reduce their incidence. We have moved a small way towards that when we speak of a standing Royal Commission, but it is not the same.

Secondly, it is a matter of grave concern that low-cost remedial civil engineering measures require to pass the test of satisfying a 50 per cent. first-year rate of return and, even worse, that those that pass do not receive prompt attention. How many such schemes are in this year's programme? How long, on average, does a scheme which passes the 50 per cent. test wait to be executed? What is the average rate of return of these schemes in the current programme?

I am sure that in any other transport mode deferment of obvious accident measures would not be countenanced. The sheer work load and complication of using cost-benefit methods to rank schemes may be replaced by the practical common sense of county council surveyors. The money saved on the mental gymnastics of cost-benefit specialists might be better devoted to the accident inspectorate which I have suggested.

Nevertheless, it is remarkable that accident statistics are not a great deal worse. When one stands on a street corner one is staggered at how many near accidents occur. Even one accident is too many, but most of our continental neighbours, particularly France, have a much worse record than we have. For that we owe a great deal to our police, voluntary advisory bodies, county and borough surveyors, councillors and, not least, successive Ministers, including the present one, who I put top of the tree.

11.13 am

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): I join those who have complimented my hon. Friend the Minister on her enthusiasm in seeking to improve standards of road safety. However, I wish to draw attention to two omissions from her speech.

First, she paid compliments to various committees, but not to any of the party committees. No doubt she did not wish to introduce a partisan element into the debate. Nevertheless, those committees play a useful role, and all the officers of the Conservative party committee were present for her opening speech.

Secondly, the Select Committee is right to draw attention in its report to the important work carried out by the Institute of Advanced Motorists and RoSPA. As a member of the national council of the Institute of Advanced Motorists, I know that it plays an important role in raising standards of awareness. My hon. Friend has not only taken, but passed, the advanced motorist's test, and we should congratulate her on that.

In many ways the Select Committee's report is a catalogue of possible improvements. I shall touch on some of them, and add others of my own. First, few bicycles are lit at night. Some time ago I tabled a question to the Home Office about that. The number of prosecutions relating to unlit bicycles in the metropolitan area each year has been roughly the same as the number that I pass every night on my three or four-mile journey home. That is appalling.

I agree that the police may somehow think that such offences are below their dignity, but that is not so. I understand that the police feel that a warning is more appropriate, but I disagree. I can fully understand that the police do not want to take up time on such matters when they could be doing better things, such as appearing in court. However, we should seriously consider introducing an offence of the parking ticket variety, where a police officer simply stops the pedal cyclist who is travelling without proper lights, gives him a ticket, and allows the normal procedures to do the rest. A mere warning will not bring about the necessary improvement. Drivers of other vehicles are placed in severe jeopardy of killing someone who is determined to get killed by not taking sensible precautions.

The accident statistics for motor cyclists, particularly in urban areas and more particularly in London, are appalling. I do not know how many motor cyclists have been prosecuted for speeding offences in central London, for which the Home Secretary has responsibility, but I suspect it is small. The problem is one of weaving, which is why I raised that matter when I intervened in my hon. Friend's speech. I take her point about the proliferation of notices. I do not suggest that they should be stuck on rear windscreens. However, bumper stickers immediately in front of motor cyclists who are weaving between cars, whether moving or stationary at traffic lights and about to move, would provide an immediate reminder of the risks they are running. Moreover, it should be a serious offence for motor cyclists to weave between moving vehicles. That can be enforced, and it is enforced in the United States.

I understand that motor cyclists are not supposed to travel in bus lanes, but they are much the safest places for them to travel. It is absurd to exclude them and I hope that a change can be made in that respect.

Finally, we have seen an enormous proliferation of motor cycle couriers. The hours, distances travelled, and

[Mr. Terence Higgins]

so on, of many other forms of commercial driving are severely regulated. I understand that many motor cycle couriers are employed on piece-work, and that the faster they drive, the more money they make. There should be regulations in that area. That is a recent development. The House has not considered the matter before. We can take action to prevent people driving badly, not only as regards weaving, but frequently deliberately—even outside the House of Commons—going on the wrong side of traffic signals and islands. Something must be done about that.

I now turn to motor vehicles and cars and the standards of testing. When one applies for a driving licence, for example in New York, one must take a written test, which is checked in a matter of seconds by a mechanical check to see whether one has assimilated the provisions of the American equivalent of the Highway Code. We do nothing like that. I am not suggesting that that should replace the questions asked by the driving tester, but there is a case for having such a written test in advance of the application for a licence.

In the United States, all the bumpers of vehicles must be approximately the same height. We have never introduced such legislation. Especially with bumpers that can absorb shocks at low speeds, such a provision would have considerable advantages over the present position with bumpers at different heights.

Motorway driving is becoming a terrifying experience for many motorists. I refer especially to the M25. My hon. Friend the Minister said that those who exceed the speed limits on motorways are only a small minority. However, had she been driving along the M25 one and a half hours ago, she would have seen that the majority of motorists were exceeding the speed limit. If one drives at 70 mph during the rush hour, one is almost the only person doing so. Many cars in the outside lane are doing well in excess of 100 mph, which is completely unacceptable. The law is not being enforced.

The problem is caused partly because we cannot decide whether the motorway should be regarded as an urban road. That determines the number of policemen allocated to it, especially in Kent. None the less. There are other ways of enforcing the law. We should consider the international experience. German and some American motorways have mechanical devices that photograph a vehicle and gauge its speed, and any offending motorist is prosecuted on the clear evidence that the had exceeded the speed limit.

We do not have enough signs in Britain. I understand the need to reduce the amount of information that the driver must assimilate, although I do not understand why almost every mile along the M25 — that may be an exaggeration—one sees notices saying that there are no services on the motorway. In any case, they are too late. Those notices should appear before one reaches the motorway, not while one is travelling along it. The unlimited sign—the white ring with a black bar across it —is not a satisfactory reminder. If the limit is 70 mph, it is better that motorists travelling at 100 mph should see a sign saying 70 mph so that they have an idea of by how much they are speeding. In reality, they know, but that small step would be more appropriate than the present arrangement.

We must consider carefully crashes that occur when the lanes on a motorway are reduced from three to two. We all know that, on approaching the sign saying that the lanes will be reduced, motorists on the outside belt past as fast as possible in the hope of cutting in at the front of the queue. When they do that, the middle and inner lanes stop dead and cars bump into each other. We should seriously consider whether, in advance of the sign saying that the number of lanes will be reduced, there should be a clear sign saying "No Overtaking", which is then enforced. We should also adopt the system used in some parts of America where, when there is an areas of congestion, cars are instructed to enter lanes alternatively. Obviously, that system could be abused, but it seems to work in America and I believe that it is worth consideration.

As to mandatory and non-mandatory speed limits, I do not understand my hon. Friend's suggestion that there is no case for making temporary speed limits mandatory. She says that it cannot be enforced and that people do not obey the limits anyway, unless a police car is present. All those arguments apply to existing mandatory speed limits. There is no argument for not making the temporary speed limits mandatory. I see no reason why temporary speed limits, whether imposed because of weather conditions or accidents, should not be made mandatory and, if necessary, enforced.

Mr. Snape: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, on the M5, at least in my experience, when temporary speed restrictions were made mandatory, many more motorists travelled at 50 mph than at 70 mph? The right hon. Gentleman's point is relevant. If the limits are made mandatory, the vast majority of people will obey them.

Mr. Higgins: Certainly publicity to that effect would be helpful. I was puzzled by my hon. Friend the Minister's logic. There is no case for not making the limits mandatory, even though not everyone may abide by them.

On a more controversial note, I believe that people would not exceed the speed limit on motorways if many motorists travelled at the speed limit in the second and third lanes. In the United States, on freeways and motorways, it is almost impossible to exceed the speed limit, at any rate by more than about 5 mph, because motorists are not expected to move into the inside lanes if they are travelling at the speed limit. I realise that that is foreign to our approach to motorways, but it is worth serious consideration. Of course, in the United States it is backed up with much more severe enforcement and far heavier penalties. Their penalties are graded much more than ours, with the result that those travelling at more than 10 mph over the speed limit are fined heavily. The overall effect of motorists' not moving to inside lanes when they are travelling at the speed limit is that all vehicles travel at approximately the speed limit. The Transport and Road Research Laboratory should consider whether we can change to that system. If we do not, it is most unlikely that we shall deal with the severe problems that are bound to arise. Although, as my hon. Friend the Minister rightly stressed, there are far fewer accidens on motorways than on other roads, the number of accidents on motorways is increasing because the law is not being enforced and the Government are not taking the steps that should be taken.

In the light of recent debates on coaches, I was persuaded that there was a case for excluding coaches from the outer lane of motorways, but, having considered the matter more deeply, I am persuaded, with my hon. Friend the Minister, that that is not the solution, because

bunching on inner lanes would also reduce road safety. However, I welcome the specific proposal that was made today. We should bear carefully in mind the case for speed regulators, which I hope will be a practical and sensible solution to the problem.

I have produced a catalogue of ideas, as has the Select Committee report. There are many ways, some of which require legislation and others do not, in which we can contribute to road safety. I hope that, in the ligh of this debate, my hon. Friend the Minister can make some progress.

11.27 am

Mr. Gordon A. T. Bagier (Sunderland, South): May I thank the Minister, her Department and the Leader of the House for reacting so swiftly to the Select Committee's request for a debate on road safety. The letter was sent only on 28 October, and here we are on 15 November having what I consider to be an extremely important non-partisan debate. The opening speeches, and the presence of so many hon. Members on a Friday, show the importance that we attach to the subject.

I also wish to pay tribute to my good friend and colleague, Harry Cowans, who was the Chairman of the Select Committee when the report was produced. As a member of the Committee, I believe that he did a first-class job. The House will miss him tremendously. Had Harry been sitting here today, he would have said to the Minister, "Well done, bonny lass. You have made a good speech today." He would have been pleased with some of her reactions to the report.

The background to the debate is the official road accident statistics, which represent people. In 1983, the last year for which figures are available, 5,445 people were killed on our roads and, almost as importantly, 300,000 people were injured. Many of them still suffer from their injuries and are unable to work properly or to continue their family lives.

Even Select Committees or individual Members do not have all the answers. We cannot put ourselves into the mind of the guy who, when he gets into a motor vehicle, immediately becomes almost a raving lunatic, or of the pedestrian who, when he is outside his motor car, wonders what the heck motor cyclists or motorists are doing tearing up when he is trying to cross the road. For some reason, when people get behind the wheel they become very macho. We must try to apply our minds to this problem.

Like the Minister, the Committee suggested consultation about governors. I am glad that the hon. Lady is looking into the basics of this, about which there was a long discussion in Committee. The governors limit the speed, but we all realise that occasionally one needs a little more oomph on the accelerator to get out of trouble. That anxiety should be looked at, and I am sure that the hon. Lady will do so when she deals with the question of governors.

I have no doubt that the seat belt legislation has had a beneficial effect on accidents. I confess that I had grave doubts about the legislation because I believed that the decision whether to use the seat belts should be left to the individual and dealt with under the rules applying to compensation for accident victims. I now believe that the legislation enforcing the use of seat belts is correct, and that it should be made permanent. Our report goes on to talk about seat belts for the back seats. I doubt whether I would go so far as to say that they should be made legislatively compulsory because of such factors as small children.

The hon. Lady and her Department should be worried about certain categories — the drinking drivers, motor cyclists, cyclists and pedestrians. I shall be as quick as I can in what I say because the report is there for everybody to read and know what the Select Committee feels. The debate is a useful opportunity for those hon. Members who are not members of the Select Committee to make known their views.

I have had much correspondence from motor cyclists, who have become excited because they believe that we are fuddy-duddies and anti-motor cyclists. I have a couple of sons who are motor cyclists and I know that when they start with a motor cycle they are getting not a vehicle to help them to get to and from work but their first piece of machinery that can travel on the roads. They are young, fit, active kids who get on their machines and think that there is no such thing as danger. They rev up their cycles when somebody who has just come off night shift is trying to sleep. The kids, often still with L plates on their machines, tear off down the streets, and weave in and out of the traffic.

As I have said, they are young, fit kids and we want them to stay that way. It is that in which we are interested and that is why we are trying to find solutions. The kids should not be killed or maimed by unnecessary tearing about on the highways and motorways. That is why there was the "Be seen" campaign to ensure that motor cyclists are seen not only by motorists but by pedestrians. Motor cyclists tend to get into the side and are a different factor in driving. If we show some interest in them, it is not because we are attacking them but because we want them to be with us and safe.

The hon. Lady rightly said that occasionally we have to react to public opinion. However, often public opinion and even polls on issues such as speed limits have answers based on emotion and not on fact. That is why our report has some depth inasmuch as those who read it in some detail will have useful information. If there is anything for which Select Committees are useful, it is for getting information collated by experts that can be examined by other people who can draw from it sensible conclusions that are not based on emotion.

I point out to the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) that I cannot think of a more dangerous way of applying speed limits on motorways than by suggesting that motorists should drive in what we call the fast lane, stick at the 70 mph limit and defy anybody to pass them. I have seen many instances when that would have been dangerous. As my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) said, the driver who doddles along in the middle lane of a triple-lane motorway, enjoying his Sunday outing, never dreaming that the heavy lorry driver behind him, who is earning his living, cannot get past him because he is not allowed to go into the fast lane is causing danger. The public should understand that a motorway system is based on the inside lane. The second, third or even the fourth lanes are for overtaking. They should not be used for doddling along when the inside lane is empty, because that is where such drivers should be.

Mr. Higgins: The hon. Gentleman has misunderstood what I said. I was not suggesting that people doddle along

[Mr. Higgins]

in the outside lane at 50 mph. However, if they are doing the speed limit there, then, as happens in America, the only people who will be frustrated are those trying to beat the speed limit.

Mr. Bagier: I have not driven on the American roads, but a few weeks ago I was driving on the Canadian roads, and I was horrified by what I saw on the triple-lane motorways. Motorists were going on the inside lane or the outside lane, weaving in and out of the traffic. They do not seem to have the lane discipline that we have. I hope that our lane discipline will continue and will be enforced.

One of the members of my Committee has to explain why we recommended a speed limit of 80 mph, a suggestion that was not plucked out of the sky. Speed limits on motorways tend to be an emotive issue. I can think of times when 20 mph is far too fast on a motorway. On the way to the House this morning, I heard a report on the radio to the effect that unfortunately there had been another major crash on the M6. I hope that it is not too serious, but apparently there will be several hours of delay. I have no doubt, without knowing any of the details, that the crash had something to do with the weather conditions and that drivers involved in the crash were probably driving outside the speed limits and certainly unsafely. The drivers themselves should realise that different speed limits apply at different times and conditions. Anybody who drives faster than the speed at which he can pull up before he hits the vehicle in front is being suicidal and should not behave like that.

The Committee feels that under the normal conditions of driving on triple-lane motorways and dual carriageways 80 mph is safe. Any suggestions to the contrary is not borne out by the facts. I shall not make the argument about people going over the limit and breaking the law because the other part of our recommendation is tighter enforcement of the speed limit. The case made for that speed limit in normal conditions has been strengthened by the recent decision of the Department to allow an increase in the speed limit for heavy lorries. The increase in the speed limit of heavy lorries to 60 mph has made it more difficult to overtake them at 70 mph. In adverse weather conditions, it is extremely difficult to get past a long lorry because of spray: therefore, one tries to do it rather quickly. Therefore, 80 mph is not a dangerous speed in the context of road safety, and I not think that an increase in the speed limit would lead to a major increase in accidents. I fully understand that any Secretary of State or Minister of State who took that major step forward would be subject to a good deal of criticism if in the ensuing six months or so there were to be an increase in road accidents.

The suggestion of an increase to 80 mph was, incidentally, in line with a proposal made by the Association of Chief Police Officers, which monitors such matters and felt that it was a safe proposal to make. Indeed, the Select Committee was largely swayed by the opinion of the association.

I am glad that the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East had a good deal to say about lighting. There is a slogan, "Be safe, be seen". There is no better way of being seen than having adequate lighting, not only on motorways but wherever there is heavy traffic. I hope that the necessary resources will be provided to ensure that there is adequate lighting.

It is not often fully understood that indiscriminate parking is a road safety hazard. In most cases parking is prohibited because the roads are busy and are used by considerable numbers of pedestrians. I hope that indiscriminate parking will be curtailed. As the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) said, none of us particularly likes traffic wardens. Nevertheless, they make a contribution to road safety.

Indiscriminate parking is a particular problem in London, and two or three years ago my Committee produced a report on the matter. It suggested the introduction of wheel clamps, which are now in use in London. We did not think that there should be any exceptions. The fact that cars which are parked indiscriminately belong to the Corps Diplomatique should make no difference. I hope that the Government will think again and have a word with the various emirates and high commissions. Every Tom, Dick and Harry working in such places seems to be entitled to use CD plates. Between this House and Charing Cross station there is a certain high commission and every morning some poor traffic warden spends hours writing out parking tickets, after which nothing more is heard. Those wardens probably have the best productivity rate in the business.

I am glad that the Minister has not rejected outright the suggestion concerning a standing royal commission on road safety. In their response, the Government have said that the suggestion is still being considered. As I said at the beginning of my speech, every year, about 5,500 people are killed and 300,000 people maimed. Therefore, we need something more than an occasional Select Committee report and an even less frequent debate. We need a body of experts such as a standing royal commission.

Mr. David Marshall: My hon. Friend referred to drinking and driving but did not elaborate on the problem. Will he agree that the higher the blood-alcohol level, the greater the risk of an accident? There is an excellent RAC recommendation that a two-tier penalty system should be introduced, with a far heavier statutory disqualification period for people with a high blood-alcohol level. Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be desirable and beneficial and could be introduced speedily?

Mr. Bagier: I welcome my hon. Friend's addendum to my speech, and recommend it to the Minister.

11.45 am

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I do not agree with the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Bagier) that in Britain we have a good record of lane discipline. When in the United States — and, indeed, even in some countries on the continent of Europe—I am impressed by the much better discipline of drivers in keeping to the correct lanes. In Britain people are grossly irresponsible, in my experience, in regard to lane discipline. I do not agree with the Select Committee's proposal to increase the speed limit on motorways, and I am glad that the Government have rejected it. However, with those caveats I warmly welcome the fact that the hon. Gentleman has succeeded in getting a debate on road safety and congratulate him on his part in producing the select Committee's admirable report. Indeed, I agree with almost all the rest of his speech.

One reason why so many members of the public and hon. Members are rather apathetic about road safety is that

they have the fatalistic feeling that not very much can be done about the awful toll of road accidents, and that it will always be with us. One of the many merits of the Select Committee's report is that it underlines how much the situation has improved because of legislative action taken by this House.

The report underlines the fact that between 1972 and 1982 the death toll fell by almost a quarter. That was undoubtedly due to the enforcement of the drinking and driving legislation, which was strongly supported by this House. There was a further decline of about 10 per cent. as a direct result of the legislation on the compulsory wearing of seat belts. I have no doubt that, if many of the recommendations of the Select Committee were to be implemented vigorously, the toll could be reduced still further.

Exactly 12 months ago I was in the Australian state of Victoria with the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall), who knows so much about this subject. We talked to road safety experts. In that state the toll has been reduced by 50 per cent. in a matter of years. That was done by a vigorous campaign involving local Members of Parliament, the police, the press and the medical profession. I have no doubt that if we gave the subject equally high priority in this country, we could get similar beneficial results. I also have no doubt that many of our constituents would support giving much higher priority to road safety.

There are many valuable points in the report, but I shall refer to just three. The first relates to motor cycles. The report draws attention to the dreadful death rate among young motor cyclists. In 1982 some 12,000 motor cyclists under the age of 20 were killed or suffered serious injury. The Committee rightly said that

"the number of deaths and serious injuries suffered by young people on our roads today can only be regarded as one of epidemic proportions."

In its evidence to the Committee, the parliamentary advisory committee for transport safety referred to the overseas experience, which suggests that the use of headlights by motor cyclists during the day is a simple and effective means of significantly reducing motor cycle casualties. The committee was kind enough to refer to my support for that proposal.

In its response, the Department of Transport does not deny that "conspicuity"—to use that awful word—is an important factor in motor cycle accidents. It recommends the use of headlamps during daylight. The hon. Members for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) and for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) picked up this point. The Department in its response, states:

"At the same time the Government recognises the strong feelings of many riders that the use of such aids should be left to the decision of the individual. It does not at present consider the evidence to be so conclusive as to justify overriding these feelings by requiring that conspicuity aids be used as a matter of law."

I regret the negative attitude of the Department on that point. Some motor cyclists are scornful of all measures that have to be taken to reduce the dreadful rate of death and injury, but, as the hon. Member for Isle of Wight mentioned, it is not a matter for motor cyclists alone. Apart from the cost of hospital treatment, there is the fact that motor cyclists are four times as likely as car drivers to run into pedestrians. If pedestrians have a better chance of seeing the motor cyclist, that toll might be reduced. In this comment and others on the motor cycle problem, alas, the Department seems to be saying, "We recognise that a dreadful number of people are being killed and injured, but we cannot really be bothered to try to do anything very dramatic about it until we have thought about the problem for a few more years."

The parliamentary advisory committee for transport safety and the British Medical Association are among several organisations that have criticised the accuracy of accident statistics. The BMA has commented that the existing definitions are misleading, and says:

"Only one in four of the casualties classified as seriously injured are, in fact, seriously injured, and many of those classified as slightly injured are, in fact, seriously injured."

Meanwhile, the preparation and presentation of traffic accident statistics are so slow that the ability to shock or even interest the general public has long passed by the time they are issued. Again, the experience of states in Australia shows that the proper use of statistics can be an important adjunct in reminding all road users of the severity of the problem.

The Department of Transport points out that it shares the responsibility for road accident statistics with local authorities and police authorities. The Department holds out some hope that more information will be given on accidents involving battery-assisted tricycles — hardly one of the main problems that we face—but it does not seem to be contemplating any serious move, and certainly not one before 1987. Perhaps that is not entirely surprising in view of the extraordinary statistical error that the Department has perpetrated. Paragraph 17 of the Select Committee's report refers to the estimate by the Department of Transport of the total cost of road accidents in 1982. The Department arrived at a figure of £2·37 billion, which includes a notional sum of £560 million for "pain, grief and suffering". It is incredible that the total medical and ambulance service cost of road accidents is put at a minute £70 million. At first I thought that that must be a misprint, but it was plain on adding the figures that the Department really believed that the figure was £70 million.

Unfortunately, earlier this year, I broke a leg badly in a ski-ing accident. Because I received the insurance figures, I have some idea of the medical cost of treating a badly broken leg. It can approach £7,000. It is incredible that the medical cost of road casualties should be put in the official statistics at a mere £70 million. I suspect that the estimate is 1,000 per cent. too low and that the true cost is closer to £1 billion.

I note the Select Committee's welcome support for the recommendation

"that the Government should give serious consideration to the appointment of a standing Royal Commission on Road Safety which would have the role of providing advice on matters referred to it by Ministers, and of initiating studies into particular aspects of road safety which, in its opinion, merited detailed examination."

The Select Committee went on to say:

"there is a need for a more continuous review of policies and achievements within the field of road safety."

I admire the qualities of the Ministers who run the Department of Transport. I particularly support the enthusiasm that my hon. Friend the Minister of State brings to the subject of road safety. The somewhat negative and bureaucratic response of the Department to many of the Select Committee's suggestions shows that my hon. Friend still has some way to go in infecting her departmental officers with her enthusiasm. The Select

[Sir Philip Goodhart]

Committee's report has given the House and the Government a great opportunity. I hope that the Department does not miss its opportunity.

11.59 am

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): I also congratulate the Select Committee on producing the first report on road safety for a long time and on enabling us to have this debate.

I worked closely with the Committee's former Chairman, Harry Cowans, in the Select Committee and in those long days when friendships are often made in transport Standing Committees. His sense of humour kept us alive and feeling that there was a ray of hope in those long, dark night. He was a wonderful personality and spoke brilliantly, especially in Committee. Like, I am sure, the rest of the House, I miss him greatly. I am sure that the Select Committee misses him. We heard the new Chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Bagier) speak this morning. I am sure that he is up to the challenge.

Road safety is not a party political matter, although the environment in which the debate takes place is often political. The Minister of State has always been helpful to the road safety lobby and those of us who are campaigning on the subject. I compliment her on much of what she said today.

Anybody interested in road safety—I have been since I was elected to the House—is regarded as a slight odd ball. It is considered a strange interest for an hon. Member, partly because we tend to underrate anything that is not intensely party political. Moreover, there is something of a media conspiracy to ensure that people are not made aware of the importance of road and transportation safety to them and their families.

Looking around the Press Gallery this morning, it is clear that we have censorship in a free press. This debate will not be reported tomorrow. There will be no headlines. Once again, the press has put down the shutters when road safety is mentioned. This is the mark of tremendous and inexcusable irresponsibility. Road accidents cause more deaths than heart disease and cancer but, unlike them, accidents are preventable. People are needlessly killed and maimed.

Everybody, especially people in public life and those influential in the media, must raise the level of consciousness about this epidemic. Although we have reduced the number of accidents and deaths, we cannot be complacent about the 5,500 deaths that occur every year and the tens of thousands of serious injuries that leave people barely able to walk or with brain damage, for example. We must take account of the dreadful damage being done day after day and ensure that we spare no effort to put the matter right.

In the next few months, there will be heightened public consciousness of what is going on and the demand that we give higher priority to measures to prevent road deaths will filter back to the House. That process has begun, and I believe that it will accelerate in the next few months.

As co-chairman of the parliamentary advisory committee for transport safety, I have worked to ascertain agreed priorities that can be delivered through legislation or other methods.

As part of the Common Market, we must not lose sight of the fact that last year, throughout the EEC countries, there were 55,000 deaths resulting from road accidents. In an increasingly mobile age, with more people travelling throughout Europe, we must give priority to avoiding accidents on an EEC-wide scale.

Next year will be European Road Safety Year. I hope that it will receive a good deal of publicity. I was sad to learn—I know that the Minister was equally sad about it—that the GPO would not even go as far as issuing a stamp to signify that occasion. I am a film buff and have no objection to the issue, for example, of stamps depicting Peter Sellers and other British film stars. I should have thought, however, that our priorities could stretch to a special stamp to signify that important year for European road safety. I hope that in 1986 we shall raise the consciousness of people to the need for greater road safety.

I shall speak today under the headings of research, education, deterrence and enforcement and legislation. Most of the remarks today have shown that we are talking, first, about priorities in terms of the money we should spend and, secondly, on where we should spend it. It must be spent not only on solutions that appear immediately to be attractive but on what is scientifically evaluated to be the best way to reduce accidents.

I deplore the way in which some newspapers—say, *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail*, whose representatives do not appear to be present today in the Press Gallery—when there is an M25 pile-up, an M6 coach crash or something akin to the Manchester air disaster splash the news in large headlines. An emotional spasm seems to run through Fleet street. At that time people appear before the cameras and are heard on the radio giving instant solutions. Such solutions may be good common sense, but taking precipitate action is not the way to reduce road casualties. We are in the realms of science, for methods of reducing and preventing accidents must be assessed on a scientific basis and not on the basis of an emotional spasm following a motorway pile-up in fog.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I share the hon. Gentleman's views about the need for research and education. Has he, like me, been astonished at the way in which this debate, in the Select Committee's reports and in the Government's responses there is hardly any mention, apart from a few references to the highway code, of the vital importance of signalling clearly when changing lanes, particularly on motorways?

We do not pay sufficient attention to such matters, unlike some states in the United States. More emphasis should be placed on educating the public in the importance of clear, measured signalling, with adequate warning time being given. Indeed, the Highway Code could be rewritten in the two sections in which signalling is referred to only briefly. Such a step would make an important contribution to educating people into being more courteous to other road users, inculcating a willingness to wait to make a manoeuvre, rather than competing with the other motorist.

Mr. Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point which hinges on the application of science to which I am referring. I hope that he will feed that concern into the research hopper, so to speak, so that it may have its due priority. The United States, which I visited recently, has introduced a new specification for high visibility brake lights, which have proved to be quite successful in helping

to reduce accidents. That will have to be assessed according to the scientific evidence before we introduce similar legislation. The status of the Highway Code needs to be scrutinised.

The Minister is right to pick out pedestrians, pedal and motor cyclists and drinking and driving as priorities. I add to that list children in cars. When I first came to the House I was drawn No. 7 in the private Members' ballot and I introduced a children in cars Bill which failed, but its proposals were taken up by the Government in the Transport Bill of 1981.

Rear seat belts in cars are not compulsory until next year. Children cannot make a decision about how safe they are in a car. We have already made illegal having an unrestrained child in the front seat of a car but we cannot yet prevent a child from being seriously injured in the back seat of a car. In a sensible, step-by-step procedure, we shall be able to make children and adults more safe when the compulsory fitting of rear seat belts comes into effect in 1986.

A distinguished colleague, Dr. Murray-McKay from the Birmingham accident research centre, says that he wants less apple pie and more science. We know what he means. He is talking about the need for research.

The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and others have made sensible suggestions about priorities. Underlying everything is the need to ascertain scientifically cost-effective priorities. No Government — this Government above all — can ignore value for money. The parliamentary advisory committee for transport safety put low-cost engineering schemes at the top of its list of priorities in its evidence to the Select Committee because in the real world low-cost scientific ways of reducing accidents in a climate of expenditure cutting will appeal to the Government.

We must ensure that research into transport safety continues apace. I am sorry that I have to agree with my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), who described himself as a young raver, that over the last 11 years that 50 per cent. of the personnel has disappeared from the Transport and Road Research Laboratory. I do not wish to make a strong political point, but good quality research has to be paid for. I do not argue that all research should be done by the TRL. Enormous amounts of good research are done at universities and research institutes throughout the country. All research institutions are desperately short of cash and good minds. We must increase quickly the amount of money spent on research if we are to achieve a reduction in accidents over the next few years.

Let us remember two things. The first is a cynical point. Research money put into road accident prevention makes a pioneering effort in the introduction of new technology that can be built on by British firms. All over the world people are eager to reduce the number of accidents. If we lead the technology in road accident reduction, we will become a market leader in selling that technology, and that is not unimportant. Secondly, knowledge and technology are an international currency and, if we make an advance, we shall be making an advance for the French, Germans, Japanese and Americans because we all share in the technology for the reduction of pain, death and suffering.

We must talk about new ways of raising research money. Recently I came across the idea of putting more money into independent research. The TRRL is part of the Department of Transport and that puts something of a dead hand on its activity. I should like to see a much more quasi-independent role for the TRRL and I should also like to see the establishment of an independent research-granting institution that could put money where it would be best used.

People may ask where the money will come from. There are two ways by which such a research institute could receive money. One would be for the Government to provide funds. But why not move into a different area of raising money for transport safety research? We should ask the insurance companies to put £1 per annum on every car insurance policy. That would raise over £20 million for research into transport safety. That would be good value for money and it would show the insurance companies in a progressive and enlightened way. We must look in that direction if we are to make the necessary strides in research.

I have spoken about small engineering schemes for accident reduction. I believe that they are vital, and I hope that the Minister will make the wherewithal available to push ahead with them. I think that small engineering schemes are seen as a priority by all hon. Members. They are good value for money and they must be implemented throughout the country so that we can get reductions as fast as possible.

Drunken driving is a most serious matter, but, strangely, it has been least dwelt upon by hon. Members. Many of us tend to shy away from that subject because it is slightly embarrassing. Most of us enjoy a drink or two and when members of a jury are asked to make a decision, they often think, "There but for the grace of God go I." We must grasp that nettle.

Publicity campaigns about drunken driving, however worthy or expensive, are relatively ineffective. Stiff penalties are also ineffective because they do not deter the drunken driver. All the scientific evidence that I have seen suggests that the only thing that will deter a drunken driver is the risk of detection.

Two thirds of those questioned in a recent survey thought that the risk of detection for drunk drivers was very small indeed. Something must be done. The number of accidents caused by drunk driving is horrendous. About 10 per cent. of injury accidents and 33 per cent. of fatal injuries to drivers and motor cycle riders involve someone who has drunk an excess of alcohol. That is unacceptable and we must reduce that toll.

As I argued in Committee on the Transport Bill in 1982, I believe that we must introduce discretionary breath tests. No Government have acted on that recommendation in the Blennerhassett report, but the police and most hon. Members know that we must have discretionary testing. Drunk driving does not kill only the drunk driver; young children, old people and many others are also killed.

We also need to take action about high-risk offenders. The present legislation is nonsense, because a drunk driver does not lose his licence immediately. He is free to drink, drive and kill again. That cannot be acceptable. The Minister and I do not believe in draconian measures, which merely lose the good will of the public, but a high percentage of drunk drivers are persistent offender. We must take strong measures against them. Detection levels must rise. I understand that action on that front is in the Government's mind, but quick action is necessary.

We could all have mentioned many other desirable measures. The Select Committee has proposed a range of important measures and we must get them implemented.

[Mr. Sheerman]

Next year is European Road Safety Year and, although I am not sure that I agree with the Select Committee's recommendation for the establishment of a permanent royal commission, I believe that we ought to set up a Select Committee on transport safety. Outside Parliament, we need another new body, perhaps along the lines of the National Transportation Safety Board in the United States, though without the same powers. The establishment of such a board would keep priorities, research and action in the public eye and could do something about the lack of interest in the media and some sections of the public about what is still the greatest epidemic of our time.

12.25 pm

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): The debate shows the House at its best. The speech of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench, was the best that I have heard him make. He managed to make some good suggestions without raising any political hackles on my part. I congratulate him and my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Transport, who opened the debate and who, unfortunately is no longer in her place.

As a Conservative member of the Select Committee on Transport, I can say that the Committee has tried to consider the issues that have come before it in as non-partisan a way as possible. I am the longest-serving member and the only one who served with Harry Cowans from the moment that it came into being. I am sure that I speak for all my Conservative colleagues when I say how much the members of the Committee appreciated Harry's Chairmanship. As a Conservative Member, I did not always agree with him, but we were always friends. I shall always treasure that friendship.

Basically, there are three areas of concern to which the report refers. First, there is concern over the driver or rider. Secondly, there is concern over the provision that we make within our society for the motor vehicle. Thirdly, there is concern about the way in which we control the motor vehicle. I am sure that we all agree that the most important area of concern is that of the driver and the rider.

About three or four weeks ago, on the morning of one of those terrible fog pile-ups on the M1, I had a long-standing engagement to go on to the motorway with the Northamptonshire police to witness the policing on our main arterial road. It was fascinating to talk to the policemen whose responsibility it is to look after the Northamptonshire section of the M1. There is no doubt that the pile-up on that morning, as with the one this morning probably, was due primarily to drivers driving far too close to the vehicle in front. Many of them were probably driving at an excessive speed, but speed is not a problem provided that the driver leaves adequate room in which to come to a halt. Every policeman to whom I spoke wanted to make the point that motorists, on the whole, had no idea of the distance in which they could pull up safely in an emergency.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) mentioned a photographic device that is available. The policemen to whom I spoke suggested one way in which we could shock some of the motorists who happily proceed over the speed limit while driving far too close to the vehicle in front of them. It is possible now to photograph a car, identify it, record its speed and show its nearness to the vehicle in front of it. Although such a method of checking on the motorist is not a legal basis for prosecution at present, we should experiment with it. If a motorist received through the post a photograph of him driving his car in excess of the speed limit and driving in a dangerous manner, that might have a salutary effect. If that operation were pursued over a period, the results could be extremely helpful.

Many policemen told me while I was with them on the M1 — it was ironic that they should do so before the recent calamitious crash on the M6 — that many accidents occurred along their section of the M1 where there were considerable lane closures. Invariably, the accident did not happen at the point at which the road narrowed. They told me that the accident could take place 100 cars down the queue. They spoke of motorists ignoring the narrowing of the road and cutting in at the last moment. The motorists near to them and keeping in the proper lane can see them and slow down, but the driver 100 cars back is not in that position. As a result of the delay that usually takes place before reacting and braking, he often piles into the car in front of him.

Driver fault is common to both instances that I have outlined. Let anyone who doubts that walk around London. Over the past 25 years there has been a lack of the road courtesy that we used often to expect. If anyone questions that, let him stand by a traffic junction and see how many people deliberately drive across against a red light. They do so without any intention of stopping. Secondly, it is revealing to walk in London and to see how motorists park their cars. Yellow lines, double yellow lines and loading and unloading areas make not a scrap of difference to thousands of motorists who are clogging up the capital.

The time has come to make the motorist realise that he has a responsibility.

I am a great supporter of the police, but I believe that the Metropolitan police have virtually thrown in their hand with regard to parking, and that must be deplored. I wish to see the law administered far more strictly. That is why I believe it is necessary to accept recommendation (xxiv):

"A national campaign . . . to encourage respect for highway law and order."

Far too many road users show a lack of respect.

If we have legislation that merely prosecutes and penalises, we shall completely fail to deal with the problems that I am outlining. We must take into account which laws the motorist is likely to accept and abide by. Therefore, I believe that the recommendation for an experimental — I stress the word "experimental" — 80 mph speed limit on our motorways is worth considering. It is dangerous, as has been said this morning, for coaches to be driven at about the same speed as heavy lorries— coaches are driven at 70 mph and lorries at 60 mph— and for motor cars to be driven at similar speeds, because bunching occurs and serious accidents will be inevitable.

It is worth contemplating whether, by allowing private cars to move a little quicker we might improve the accident statistics. As has been said, the vast majority of motorists probably exceed the 70 mph limit. If we rigidly enforce an 80 mph limit and see an improvement in motorway behaviour, the experiment will have been well worth while. I strongly support the recommendation.

Mr. Snape: I do not wish to disturb our new-found unanimity, but how will the 80 mph limit be enforced?

Mr. Fry: It must be enforced by the traditional methods and by some of the new methods that I have mentioned. If it were made legal to photograph moving vehicles, we should merely require to have a camera at the side of the road to photograph passing vehicles. It would no longer be necessary to chase a motorist down the motorway and stop him while 150 other motorists went past at speeds well over 70 mph. We must consider new devices to deal with such a serious problem.

I wish to deal with the enforceability and acceptability of the law. We must consider with grave anxiety some of the things that are happening in our major cities. It is no good saying that motorists should not come into central London. The overwhelming majority of people who come into London on business use public transport. Unless we ban motor vehicles from the centre of London, as some Opposition Members might like, many motorists will always drive in. It it therefore pointless to pursue policies which make it more difficult for people to find off-street parking, or to have a system whereby the parking law can be so easily ignored.

There should be a system to enable the motorist to come into the city and park his vehicle legally. He should not have to say, "I shall leave it in a place where I am not supposed to park. The chances of getting caught are not great and it is cheaper in the long run than finding a car park for which I must pay." That is what is happening in London.

One of these days we shall probably have a royal visit. It will be raining, a heavy lorry will break down in Park lane and the whole of the centre of London will come to a horrible grinding halt. That has nearly happened on several occasions. We must see that more off-street parking is available. We must increase the number of traffic wardens and enforce the law more strictly.

A great deal has been said about the Committee's recommendations on motor cyclists. All of us are frightened about the implications of the trend in the statistics. There is already a great deal of good training for them, but motor cycle groups in my constituency and county are worried about youngsters riding motor cycles because it is not the youngsters who would benefit most from the advice of the groups who attend. One of the great difficulties of training is that the keen motor cyclists are invariably the safest, and those who merely want to use a motor cycle to get about and who are not interested in joining groups with others are much more likely to have an accident. That is why we need to accept the report's recommendations on the subject.

Similarly, there is no merit in the idea of approaching the problem by considering whether one should be allowed to ride a large machine at an early age. If it is proved that training alone is insufficient—there are some disturbing statistics about the number of trained youngsters who have accidents—we must consider deterring extremely young riders from using large machines. To graduate through a series of machines as one becomes more experienced may be one way of avoiding some of the horrifying accidents.

I was interested to hear my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) follow that idea through in relation to those who pass the driving test. It is absurd that a 17-year-old who has probably learnt to drive in a school of motoring car, has never driven at 70 mph on a motorway and has never driven a powerful car, should be entitled to get into a Jaguar and drive at 70 mph or more down the M1 on the day after he passes his test. Perhaps we should consider having a probationary period after passing the driving test, which need apply not only to 17-year-olds. Perhaps the car should be marked, and, as with motor cycles, it should be agreed that one does not drive a car with an engine above a certain cubic capacity. There should be some limitation, not because it is easy to enforce, but to impress upon the young driver that he is not experienced merely because he has passed a somewhat inadequate driving test.

Thirdly, we must consider how to control the use of the motor car. We have already discussed seat belts. I was one of the leading opponents to the compulsory wearing of seat belts, yet I dutifully obey the law. During the past three weeks, I have been disturbed to find that the number of lives saved does not relate to the optimistic statistics given when the debate was initiated some years ago, and I hope that the Minister will comment on that. Other factors appear to come into play. Therefore, while I do not suggest that we return to the days when wearing front seat belts was not compulsory, we should approach carefully the question of the compulsory wearing of rear seat belts.

If any colleagues have a family of six, they will discover that there is no family car that will take six people comfortably. Normally, they have two seats in the front, and if one has four children they must all go in the back. For that reason problems will arise in enforcing the wearing of rear seat belts. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will take note of that, and also the fact that the Committee considered in detail the wearing of rear seat belts, but came out firmly against any decision on compulsion.

Mr. Waller: My hon. Friend said that the statistics on the compulsory wearing of front seat belts do not suggest the great improvement that was predicted three years ago. Since it has been suggested that driver behaviour may have been altered by the wearing of seat belts, would there not be a case, as we are to consider the renewal of the legislation during the next few weeks, at least for agreeing that we do not have all the evidence on which to base a permanent decision and that there may be a case for a continued experiment? Might we not proceed on the basis that compulsion should continue for another three years?

Mr. Fry: I have considerable sympathy with my hon. Friend's view.

As joint chairman of the parliamentary road safety group, as well as being a member of the Select Committee on Transport, I congratulate the Government—my hon. Friend the Minister has not heard me say that in recent months—on their policy for building roads, especially bypasses, which make a major contribution to road safety. I shall be extremely happy when the two bypasses that are planned in my constituency are built, because we shall probably have done as much as we can in that respect.

However, a danger seems to be emerging. I know that it is not due to the Department's planning; it is due more to the attitude of the Department which controls all Government expenditure. In recent years, there has been a downgrading of some proposed roads, which often leads to dual carriageways being reduced to single carriageways. We all know about the terrible accident in Norfolk which resulted from such planning. Planned motorways have been downgraded to all-purpose roads. This is causing great anxiety.

In my constituency, the A45 leading off the M1 is a county road, not a trunk road, but motorists coming off the

[Mr. Fry]

M1 still think that they are on the M1. It is not built exactly to motorway standards, but it is an extremely fast road, and the police admit that the overwhelming majority of motorists drive along it at high speeds. They treat the road as though it were still the M1, but on that road one can meet cyclists, learner drivers and agricultural machinery. Is it any wonder that, during the two to three years since it has been opened, the accident statistics for that stretch of road are horrifying? Only this week, the inquest on two cyclists killed on that road expressed grave concern about the way in which it was built and those who are allowed to use it.

If there is deliberate downgrading of roads that will be heavily used, the Department must reconsider the regulations governing the use of those roads. The A45 certainly should not carry cyclists or farm vehicles, because it is far too dangerous. If we continue the policy of downgrading roads that should be of a higher standard, we shall not reduce road accidents. We might save a little money in the interim, but in the long run we will endanger lives and cause considerably greater public expenditure.

I am pleased that the Select Committee chose the subject of road safety for this report. I accept what the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) said about the need for continual appraisal of the problem. It is something to which nearly every hon. Member can make a contribution.

I should like us to have an annual debate and review to consider new ideas, to check statements by the Government and to bring in what other countries are doing. When all is said and done, we are dealing with an avoidable loss of life and damage to the human body. Anything that the House or one of its Committees can do to reduce that is to be commended.

12.45 pm

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): I agree with what has been said about the high quality of the debate and that it has been constructive, with hardly any negative factors. I am pleasantly surprised at the high commitment that various hon. Members have brought to the principles of road safety. Regrettably, I cannot reach their level, but I still retain interest in this important matter.

The hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) argued for an 80 mph speed limit, and I agree that enforcement would be difficult. One of the problems of enforcement by the traditional method of patrol cars is the fuel restrictions placed on police authorities because of budgetary policies. My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) asked why there were humps by the side of the road and why patrol vehicles were placed there. The answer goes back to the time when we had a fuel shortage 11 or 12 years ago, and 55 mph was made the national speed limit. Vehicles were placed on the humps to save their fuel in addition to allowing their drivers to keep an eye on other vehicles.

I take note of the point made by the hon. Member for Wellingborough about bypasses of our towns with populations of 60,000 to 40,000, the old traditional towns that are all over the United Kingdom. Within their budgetary limits, the Government are pursuing the building of bypassed. In the north of England some of our most beautiful small towns have been bypasses by the A1, to good effect. I hope that this policy will continue.

I should like people to make less use of their cars. All Governments should deter motorists from driving. I know that we shall never reach the ultimate of no cars on the highways. We have heard a lot about London's parking and traffic problems today, but there are problems in all our major cities. I can only give the example of the Tyne and Wear project—I hope that I shall be forgiven for being parochial. One of the underrated successes of the Tyne and Wear metropolitan transport system, based on road-rail integration, is that within Tyneside itself the traffic volumes have decreased because it is an attractive proposition to travel on a public transport system that is modern, clean, efficient and operates well.

People from the outlying areas come to the metro system, park their cars and can travel in either by bus or metro. Fewer people are using their cars in the inner city, which in turn means fewer accidents involving pedestrians, less use of fuel and more space for the pedestrians.

Emphasis should be given to the development of similar systems in the major cities, or perhaps even better ones. Instead of discussing the possibility of crossing the straits of Dover by whatever method is chosen—by tunnel or whatever—our thoughts should be directed to finding the financial resources for the development in cities of transport systems in places such as Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Edinburgh, Bristol and Norwich. If some of the money that we waste on surplus agricultural production were to be applied to the roads, the financial problems could be overcome. Most of us as motorists pay an additional £500 a year in taxes to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, either through the road tax or the tax on petrol. Surely some of that money could be returned for use in the interests of road safety.

We should look again at the much-maligned British railway system. If some of the money that is wasted in contributing to EEC funds were to be given to British Rail to improve its efficiency, more people would be encouraged to leave their cars at home. Unfortunately, there is not much encouragement for them to do so, because most of our inter-city trains are overcrowded. Most of them have mechanical failures and do not arrive on time. I understand that the problem is to be rectified by the introduction of another type of engine on some of the inter-city trains.

I understand that from 1 January British Rail is to introduce a system under which cyclists will have to reserve a position before they can put their cycles on a train. That is ludicrous. A man and his children living in Newcastle may want to put their cycles on a train so that, when they arrive in York, they can use them to visit the minster. They may want to take them to Edinburgh, or even to Sheffield, but they will be unable to do so after 1 January unless they reserve a position for their cycles on the train. British Rail should be encouraging people to use their cycles so that they can leave their cars at home.

I am not an opponent of the National Bus Company or of any other forms of bus transport between our cities. Indeed, more should be done to encourage people to use bus transport so that the number of motor cars on the motorways can be reduced. As several hon. Members have said, and as the Minister emphasised, the safety factor of buses and other types of public transport has to be considered. The Minister has given the House the assurance that that will be done, and with that assurance I hope that more people will be encouraged to use buses.

Cars should be used mainly in the outer areas of our cities. Clearly they have to be used in urban and country areas because of the lack of public transport, but there is no reason why a campaign should not be introduced to educate people in the use of public transport. I use public transport as much as I can and I find it very relaxing. I know that the Minister uses it. One is able to meet people and to hear what they say about the Government or the Opposition.

Those hon. Members who belong to the RAC have probably read the annual report for 1984 which refers to the need to protect the interests of motorists. On reading the report, it is clear that it is seeking to protect the interests of pedestrians and is thus helping to save lives.

I have here a report from the British Road Federation. The federation, of course, lobbies for the road haulage industry, but from page 19 it is clear that, although the federation is concerned with profitability and the movement of goods on the road, it is also fully aware of the need to consider the safety factor.

I hope that my suggestions have added to the quality of the debate.

12.55 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): The report of the Select Committee on Transport makes fascinating reading. I congratulate all my colleagues who served on it.

I was interested in the recommendation in paragraph 47 about the Institute of Advanced Motorists. I was challenged by the IAM in my area to have an assessment. I have been driving safely for 15 years, and do nearly 20,000 miles a year. I was horrified to find that the institute did not think that I drove well enough. After several lessons I was still not up to its standards. I could not quite figure out what it wanted me to do with the gears. However, I say to any colleagues who think that their driving is very good that they should go to the IAM and ask for its assessment and find out just what mistakes they are making. I am grateful for the institute's care and efforts.

I was not in the House when the seat belt legislation was discussed. If I had been, I should have voted for it. When it comes back, I shall vote for it. I say to my colleagues who have doubts that those who do not believe in it will never have enough evidence to convince them that it is a satisfactory measure, and those who believe in it are overwhelmed by the evidence that many lives have been saved and a great deal of money has been saved to the public purse.

I should like to raise a question that resulted from an accident near my home during the summer. A constituent of mine, Mr. Andrew Bates, was involved. The accident took place on the A38 at Willington, about 1 mile from my home in Derbyshire. He was riding his motor cycle, going home with a friend on another bike from a meeting of the local Kawasaki club, of which he was a founder member. It was quite late, but he had not been drinking. His bike was in perfect order—in fact, it was his pride and joy. The weather was reasonable and the roads were clear. He turned off the road to go home, but he took the wrong turning, crashed into two cars and found himself in a garage slipway. He drove straight into the wall and was killed instantly. He was 23 years old, a bright and pleasant young man working in a local factory. The inquest on 3 September returned a verdict of accidental death.

Andrew's family believes that the accident happened because he was wearing a dark visor on his helmet. He simply could not see where he was going. His family came to see me to ask for my help in getting such things banned as soon as possible.

The Select Committee report shows that young people are more likely to be killed or seriously injured than any other road user. My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) drew attention to paragraph 14, which calls it an epidemic. That is right. Young motor cyclists are the most vulnerable of all road users, and the rate of death and serious injury for motor cyclists is 30 times greater than for car drivers. Motor cycle accidents account for one quarter of all deaths on the road and a substantial proportion of young deaths from all causes. In fact, the rate among teenagers is about 16 per cent.

The numbers dying rose steadily during the 1970s even when deaths among other types of road user were falling. One thousand motor cyclists are killed every year and nearly 20,000 are seriously injured, over 70 per cent. being young people. The cost to the public purse is enormous and the cost in terms of anguish and suffering for those people and their families is incalculable. I do not pretend that banning dark visors will save 1,000 lives a year, but I am certain that it would have saved the life of my young constituent and that it would save the death and injury of other young people.

Andrew had bought a standard helmet with a visor, both according to the British Standards Institution and bearing the kite mark. He tried to persuade his local Kawasaki dealer, Mr. Jim Swift, to sell him a dark visor. Mr. Swift said in a letter to me:

> "I am endeavouring to arrange for a visor to be sent to you but in this respect I am relying upon others who might not be quite so willing to help you get them banned since they are very good sellers, providing as they do a very good anonymity.
>
> As you may have gathered I don't sell them for the personal reason that I believe them to dangerously restrict vision both during the day and night . . . Andy was a friend as well as a customer and I did my best to dissuade him from buying such a visor. In the end he bought it elsewhere."

I have been told that there are visors on sale that allow only 4 per cent. of light through so that one cannot see a red light changing, even in daylight. These things are perfectly legal. Andrew Bates broke no law. Nor did the man who sold the visor to him. Nor did the manufacturer. Why does a perfectly sensible young man who has just spent thousands of pounds on his bike fit a £5 visor to his helmet and then drive straight into a wall?

Apparently dark visors are the fashion. Their use is encouraged by what young people see on television. I was told that Andrew was a fan, as are many young people, of a television programme called "Streethawk" which was shown in our area. I must confess that I had never seen it. I am grateful to the distributor who yesterday showed me samples of the programme. In it, a young policeman in black gear with a black helmet, a black visor and a black motor cycle goes out as a vigilante to cure crime in San Francisco, Los Angeles, or wherever it is. In a fantasy he has a special vision through the visor. Of course, the real visor is not like that. I have checked with Central Television and have been told that only 12 episodes were made. To its credit, Central Television has said that, having shown those programmes, it will never show them again, even though it receives a large number of requests.

The fashion is encouraged by those who should know better. The RoSPA leaflet on protective gear contains three

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

pictures of young cyclists in helmets, two of which make it look as though the visor is dark. I ask RoSPA to think hard about the literature it is putting out and to change it.

Mr. Sheerman: Knowing what I do about RoSPA, I should be surprised if it put out a leaflet showing dark visors. I do not think that the leaflet shows a photograph. It might give the impression that dark visors were used, but I am sure that RoSPA would not show with approval that type of equipment.

Mrs. Currie: I shall pass the leaflet over to the hon. Gentleman. The advice given is excellent. It contains three drawings, two of which look as though the helmet has a tinted visor, even though the advice on the leaflet is that such a visor should not be used. I am sure that RoSPA will pick up my points and change those drawings as quickly as possible.

Now to the state of the law. The current regulations —the Motor Cycles (Protective Helmets) Regulations, SI 1980/1279 and the Motor Cycles (Protective Helmets) (Amendment) Regulations, SI 1981/374—require any crash helmets worn by motor cyclists and passengers to conform with British Standard 2495 or 5361. Those standards lay down the specifications that manufacturers have to meet for new crash helmets. The British standards require visors fitted as original equipment for helmets to be of clear material which is resistant to abrasion. A new British standard—BS6658—has just been published and updates the earlier ones. But Andrew had a replacement visor. On 19 March 1985 my hon. Friend the Minister of State announced that draft regulations were being circulated which would require replacement visors to comply with the latest amendments to the relevant British Standard. The main requirements would be that no replacement visor should be so tinted as to reduce light transmission by more than 50 per cent. and that all visors should be made of material that was resistant to abrasion. These regulations have now been made—SI 1985/1593 —but they do not come into effect until 1 July 1987.

The position is, therefore, that visors fitted as original equipment to new helmets must be of clear, abrasion-resistant material. However, visors sold as replacements or separately from helmets may be tinted, provided that they conform with the relevant British standard—but not for 19 months. Therefore, these lethal visors are still on sale, are still being produced and are still just as likely to kill our constituents. If we are serious about the fact that dark visors are dangerous, it is madness to allow their sale. I think that the Government believe that. Why wait until July 1987? There are acceptable alternatives on the market. We should ban these visors as soon as possible.

I suppose that there are a number of arguments against banning. The dear souls of the Motor Cycle Action Group, who seem to be against compulsion of any kind in any aspect of motor cycle legislation, will tell us about freedom. That is balderdash. Freedom has a price. If the cost is to be paid in lives, that price is too high. I served on the Select Committee on Social Services. We spent all our time looking at the way in which we spend money to alleviate pain and suffering. The longest waiting list in Britain is for orthopaedic surgery, and we have an obligation to take that into account. I am a lover of freedom, but not in this case. The better argument is that badly scratched visors are a more widespread problem than dark ones and that there are technical problems with materials. I am told that suitable material has been available since 1979, so that is not a strong reason for leaving the law as it is.

A Department of Transport press release of 19 March 1985 said that we must wait until 1987 to give manufacturers and sales outlets a chance to clear old stock. My hon. Friend the Minister should consider closely how much stock these people carry. I do not believe that they carry more than a few weeks' stock—these are fast moving lines for retailers. Bob Heath Visors of Birmingham, a large manufacturer, produces about 350,000 visors a year—the total market is about 500,000. Bob Heath has been extremely helpful to me and tells me that it carries about £100,000 worth of stock. It does not take an arithmetical genius to work out that he carries only three to four months' stock. Bob Heath also tells me that it does not and will not make visors which admit less than 50 per cent. of light. It follows, therefore, that there are comparatively few of these things around, but they are around.

We have a precedent in the case of smelly rubbers. I voted for legislation on scented erasers when the Government moved to have them banned virtually overnight. They left manufacturers and wholesalers with £140,000 worth of stock. The Government did that because it was said that somebody had died from swallowing a scented eraser and that the cost to human life was not acceptable. We can do the same with tinted visors. I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to think along those lines.

I wish to say a brief word about the night time use of tinted visors. When the new regulations come in, in July 1987, the visors will have to be labelled "Day Time Use Only". It is not proposed to ban their use. It will not be illegal to wear them at night. Even if they reduce the light admitted by only 50 per cent., they will still be very dangerous. Bob Heath has written to me and to the Department of Transport on the same lines saying:

> "We would like to see a far stronger law, making the wearing of tinted visors illegal after lighting-up hours, and making the offence endorsable."

It beats me why anyone thinks that such a label will achieve anything. Why not go the whole hog? Manufacturers will not be affected and a ban would be easily enforceable as it is difficult to hide what is on your head when riding around the streets of Derbyshire. The complacency of those concerned in this small though important matter is breathtaking.

RoSPA has called these dark visors suicidal. It has got it right. We have some obligation to protect our young people on the roads. We could respond more speedily and effectively.

1.7 pm

Dr. John Gilbert (Dudley, East): I apologise to the Minister for not being present to hear her speech. I look forward to reading it.

I congratulate the Select Committee on its extremely thorough report. It is a subject on which one can consider so many issues that one has to exercise tight self-discipline. I propose to consider only five matters, and those briefly, but that does not mean that I do not think that other issues are unimportant.

I echo what my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) said about the

Blennerhassett report. I have an interest in it because I appointed him and he reported to me. I endorsed his findings totally. Unfortunately, I was translated to another Department before I could do anything about the report.

I hope that the Government have enough courage to make further progress. Drunken driving is probably the greatest social evil in the country, bearing in mind the slaughter, pain and distress that it causes to many families. If the Minister can persuade her colleagues to join her in supporting further enhancement of police powers in that respect, she would have the support of many of my hon. Friends.

The law must be respected, or it is a silly law, and it is difficult to say that the law on speed limits in Britain is generally respected. That is clear from the evidence of our eyes, not only on motorways but in towns. I break the speed limit law from time to time. It would be a brave hon. Member who could say that he or she has never broken the speed limit. Indeed, in towns it is often difficult to obey the speed limit law when the rest of the traffic is exceeding 30 mph—often on roads where it is safe for the limit to be exceeded.

I appreciate that this is a matter of concern to chief constables in many areas. The speed limits in some areas are too low, with the consequence that the law is brought into disrespect. When the police crack down, they usually do on those stretches of road on which people more frequently break the speed limit, and they tend to be stretches of road where it is safe to exceed the limit. The result is that friction is introduced in relations between motorists and the police and that makes for an unhealthy state of affairs. For that reason, I endorse the Select Committee's suggestion for a temporary enhancement on motorways to 80 mph for a trial period.

I agree with the Select Committee's recommendations on lighting. However, I would go further. I urge the Minister to issue instructions for the maintenance of lights on motorway signs to receive a high priority. Indeed, the maintenance of lighting on other signposting throughout the country should receive a high priority, for few things are more dangerous than motorists approaching signs that are not lit. They slow down and disrupt the traffic flow, often with tragic results.

I think that it is still legal to drive on lit sections of motorways with nothing more than side lights switched on. If that is the case, it is a scandal. I recall discovering that fact many years ago, when I tried to introduce legislation to make the use of dipped headlights at night mandatory. A Conservative Member told me that he regularly drove along the M4 with only his sidelights on and that he was legally entitled to do so. I told him that I thought he was a raving maniac. Nevertheless, I learnt that he was within his legal rights, because it was a lit area and the lamp posts were sufficiently close together to make his action legal, given the state of the regulations at that time. I gather that those regulations still apply, although the sidelights on some cars are nothing more than vestigial.

I hope that the Minister will consider seriously the whole question of signposting. I have two recommendations for her, one of which would cost some money. I suggest that that before every motorway exit there should be at least one gantry sign across the whole motorway. Unlike motorways in other countries, we have along our motorways narrow, median strips, so that the warning signs for exit are almost always on the left-hand side of the motorway; in other words, beyond the hard shoulder.

When one is driving along a motorway which is heavy with high-sided traffic, one can pass a sign without having the faintest idea of its existence. One might be taken by surprise then coming upon an exit or one might be alerted only by the final lines on the road. Pulling over at the last minute is dangerous. Sometimes drivers miss their exits. A convenient bridge makes it possible to warn motorists that the next exit is, for example, two miles away. We should not be so rigid in the spacing of signs. A major contribution to motorway safety would be made if all signposts were placed overhead.

Much more could be done to improve signs in our major cities. Many accidents in cities are caused by drivers changing lanes at the last minute to make a right or left turn. The Minister should send an official to America to examine methods in Los Angeles. English cities are not built on grid patterns like American cities, but the advice given to a motorist going through a major American city on when he must change lanes to arrive at his destination is far superior to anything here. In down-town Los Angeles one is fed information not only about the next turn off, but the turn off beyond.

When I was at the Department of Transport I had battles with officials who took an insular attitude to suggestions from outside. I hope that things have changed.

My last suggestion will cost the Government nothing. Cars driven at night with only one headlight are dangerous. A light can go in any car without the driver knowing it. One might be stopped and warned or be charged with dangerous driving, according to the mood of the officer on the spot or of the senior officer who decides whether a driver should be prosecuted. In many countries, a statutory requirement is that motorists carry with them at all times certain spare parts. That is not an onerous requirement. already in the United Kingdom, in line with European law, motorists have to carry a red warning triangle. It would be sensible to insist that motorists carry not only spare bulbs but spare fuses.

Recently, my windscreen wipers failed to work. I should have been in difficulty if I had not been carrying some spare fuses. I had them because I was travelling abroad and had taken an overseas repair kit with me. I do not always carry it when driving here in my mini. That suggestion would not involve cost to the Government or extra cost to the motorist because a motorist would have to replace the bulb eventually. I think that my suggestion would improve road safety.

Such debates are healthy. We do not discuss road safety often enough. The last time that I looked at the figures, which I admit was many years ago, the rate of deaths and injuries on the roads of this country was something like 14 times the rate at which the IRA was killing and maiming people. When we compare the publicity that the two forms of social disaster attract, I think that we have got our values seriously wrong.

In my last four visits to my constituency I have witnessed the aftermath of no fewer than seven road accidents between the centre of Birmingham and Dudley. I do not drive more than about 80 or 90 miles at the weekend. It is only impressionistic, but I have a nasty feeling that the statistics are beginning to creep up again at a rate that will be a shame for all of us.

[Dr. John Gilbert]

When I left the Department of Transport, which was then part of the Department of the Environment, I had in mind a range of other suggestions for road safety. I know that there is a convention that Ministers do not see the papers of previous Ministers, but I should be delighted for the Govenment to look at any of my suggestions and treat them on their merits. I sometimes thought that my officials were rather horrified at the prospect. I wish the Minister well.

1.21 pm

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I congratulate the Select Committee on Transport on an excellent report and the Government on their response to it. My hon. Friend the Minister of State does superb work for the industry and road safety and she seems to have achieved a wangle in the autumn statement. I notice that there is to be an additional provision for capital spending on national roads amounting to £37 million for 1986-87 and £52 million in 1987-88. Many of my colleagues will immediately lobby my hon. Friend for new bypasses or dual carriageways, but I will be lobbying her for more motorways to be lit.

I am joint chairman, with the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), of the British parliamentary lighting group. We now have an all-party membership of just under 100. In 1984 we published a book, "Light up the Roads", in which we advocated lighting on all of Britain's motorways. Since being elected in June 1983, one of my main campaigns has been to make motorways safer. That has something to do with the fact that my constituency is in Leicester and that the M1 separates me from the House.

Motorways have the best safety record of any road, but it is serious that each year 200 people die on motorways. We can all recall the tragic crashes on the M25 last December, the recent crash on the M6 and the crash that occurred today. I am not saying that lighting those motorway stretches would have saved lives, but it is tragic that so many lives have been lost. Spending £90 million on illuminating all the existing stretches of our motorways would be money well spent. Only about 455 miles of motorway are lit and 1,300 miles are still unlit. Something has to be done.

I have discovered, in an answer to a recent question, that it would cost £9 million to light the remaining stretch of the principal and most serious motorway, the M1. Most hon. Members seem to use that road at some time, but only 68 miles of its 189 miles are lit.

Lighting maintenance for all the motorways would cost £9 million. That would be money well spent. As I said in a letter to *The Times*, the average cost of a night-time fatality is £205,460. Motorway lighting would reduce the night-time accident rate. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister has agreed on that point, and the report of the Select Committee on Transport said in paragraph 169:

> "A significant contribution to improved road safety can be made by the installation of lighting at appropriate locations on the road network."

The Department of Transport stated that the rate of accidents during the hours of darkness was nearly double that for the hours of daylight. Accidents at night are more likely to produce fatalities and severe injuries. That was stated in March 1983, in evidence to the Select Committee on Transport.

Not all accidents and fatalities occur on unlit stretches of motorways, but there is poor visibility at night—as well as fog during the day—and a higher incidence of drunk driving at night. The mental state of drivers is not right; they are not in control. Paragraph 170 of the Select Committee report stated:

> "The results for motorways also show that the installation of lighting could be effective, with accident reductions of up to 60 per cent."

That is an important statistic. Paragraph 172 said:

> "the Association of Chief Police Officers felt that 'all new motorways should be fitted with overhead lighting as a matter of routine'."

That view was endorsed by the Select Committee.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State had said that there was no intention of reversing the Department's policy not to light all motorways throughout their length, but I understand that views have changed and that recommendations (xxxviii) and (xxxix) may receive more favourable consideration. I know that my hon. Friend believes in more lighting and I appreciate the cost-difficulties. Recommendation (xxxix) says:

> "The Department should consider as policy the gradual installation of overhead lighting on existing motorways".

We are talking about 1,300 miles of motorway. It is interesting to note that when the recommendation is reproduced in the Government observations it says:

> "the installation of overhead lighting".

The Select Committee refers to

> "the gradual installation of overhead lighting".

I do not mind how long it takes, as long as it is done. The Government's observation states:

> "The Department is reviewing its policy on the provision of overhead lighting on motorways. A balance has to be struck between the advantages of motorway lighting, and the cost of it, which is high. The Department is currently working out the best arrangements for testing the cost benefit".

My hon. Friend the Minister of State has been helpful in considering the request of the British parliamentary lighting group that all stretches of the M25 should be reconsidered for lighting, providing they are not subject to contrary undertakings given at public inquiries. The Government were allowed to proceed with some stretches of the motorway despite the fact that some people were worried about the effects of lighting on the environment. It was thought that lighting on some stretches of the M25 out in the wilds would not be environmentally acceptable. However, if the lighting had been there from the start—it would not be glaring orange and would not frighten residents as they look out of their kitchen windows—the safety record of the motorway would be better.

I have a well-known interest in connection with the M25. Only 40 miles of the 122 miles of that motorway are lit. Lighting the rest would cost £7 million and maintenance would cost £750,000 a year. I am convinced that all of the M25 will be lit eventually, but it would have been cheaper to install lighting during construction. Ducts are being installed in various new stretches of motorway, but lights were installed during construction on only 168·3 miles of motorway.

Lighting proposals are always assessed on a cost-benefit basis and we always look at the expected savings from the reduction of the number of accidents. It would be neither economical nor environmentally acceptable to light motorways throughout their length if the costs were too great, but I do not believe that it is. The lighting of unlit stretches of all motorways should be given even more favourable consideration.

There are many lane closures and contraflow systems on motorways—far too many on the M1—and motorists suffer from not being given enough notice, from driving too fast and from poor visibility because of fog, snow and rain. If lighting is provided, at least they will be able to see that something is amiss. I should like compliance with warning signs to be mandatory. It is important that motorists do not exceed the speed that is shown on a sign. If the sign tells them to drive at 50 mph, they should not drive any faster than that as they approach a lane closure or accident, for example.

It seems that motorists on motorways slow down only when police are around. That is depressing. I am delighted that the police patrol, but motorists should be thinking of others while driving on motorways.

As I have said, I am worried about the M25, which is becoming heavily used and congested. It will be necessary to provide lights quickly as well as extensive fog warning systems. Motorists must be made fully aware of all road conditions.

In answer to one of my questions, my hon. Friend the Minister of State said that motorway lighting between the Newport Pagnell service area and junction 16 was next in line. She said that that lighting would probably not be installed until the spring of 1987. I make a plea that it should be installed earlier than that. My hon. Friend encouraged me by saying that she was

"keeping under review the need to provide additional lighting on the remaining unlit stretches of the M1."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1984; Vol 69, c. 526.]

That must be good news.

We must bear in mind that night time fatalities during 1984 cost £700 million. There could be a good return over five years if we went ahead with additional lighting. It is a tragedy that 5,000 people or more die in road accidents each year. The cost of accidents at a speed of 50 mph on dark, unlit roads in 1983 cost the taxpayer £3 million. At 60 mph, the cost was £200 million and at 70 mph it was £44 million. These figures tell us that something must be done urgently.

Last year we had the "Stay low" campaign, which was designed to reduce drinking and driving. Unfortunately, it suggested to some that they should not drink too much before driving. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister of State made it clear that she was against drinking and then driving. Unfortunately, the campaign message did not get through completely to some. I consider it wrong to have a campaign only at Christmas. I support the recommendations of the Select Committee on Transport. If we have a campaign only at Christmas, motorists will think that they can get away with drinking and driving during the rest of the year. It is only at Christmas that they hire coaches to go to parties at pubs or elsewhere.

Drinking and driving is the most serious road safety problem in Britain. RoSPA has reported that 1,200 deaths a year result because people have drunk too much. About one fifth of all deaths on our roads are caused through drink. It has been suggested that we should reduce the maximum blood-alcohol level from 80 mg per 100ml to 50 mg. I do not want to get drawn too far into that argument. However, people must be careful before they leave the pub and jump into their car if they feel that they are over the top. The police must be far more vigilant. It will surprise some hon. Members when I say that random breath tests should be the order of the day.

In reply to my question yesterday, when I asked my hon. Friend the Minister of State to consider introducing random breath tests, she said:

"I am satisfied that existing police powers to require a breath test are sufficient to enable the law on drinking and driving to be enforced effectively."

I hope that that answer will be published widely. It means that the police have the powers that are necessary to stop anyone who is driving away from them or from the pub if they believe genuinely or reasonably, or suspect, that the driver has excess alcohol in his blood.

The public must be made aware throughout the year that they may be stopped and, in certain circumstances, will be stopped. With that awareness, they will exercise a greater care in not drinking to excess. They will adopt the same attitude to drinking and driving throughout the year as that which they adopt over Christmas.

I know that my hon. Friend will be introducing a new publicity campaign on drinking and driving, and I await it with great interest. I know that it will be promoted during December until the new year and that the police are co-operating with my hon. Friend. I hope that she will say that such campaigns will not be confined to Christmas. Drinking and driving is a problem throughout the year and, as I have said, publicity on the subject must not be confined to Christmas.

I am satisfied that the police have powers to stop drivers who appear to be over the top, and they must exercise them. I am not criticising landlords or licensees, who may not like the introduction of random breath tests. They may feel that the view is taken that they cannot judge when someone has had too much to drink. They are responsible people and I know that they do not serve drinks to those who are well over the top.

I am not happy about the Lion laboratory's pocket alcometer. It enables people in public houses to carry out a quick test to see whether they are over the top. If they are not, they have one more drink and then they are over the top. The alcometer gives them a false sense of security, and we must stop it. We all realise that drinking too much can kill.

We must consider carefully the way in which the drinking test is carried out. Too many people think that half an hour after passing a driving test they can drive down the motorway at 70 mph. They are not up to that. The test should be much longer. Night time driving should be included, as the Association of Chief Police Officers has said. There should be a test on dual carriageways. People do not have to take a car parking test, and that is nonsense.

Police are right to prosecute people for drunken driving, and it is correct to imprison people for being well over the top. The Leicester city bench has announced that it will imprison and disqualify for three years people who are four times over the legal limit. They will gaol reckless drivers who are chased while trying to evade arrest while over the top. They will fine people £300 and disqualify them for other offences. That is a step in the right direction. But we must go further.

I wish people to be banned for many years if they have killed someone while drunk. I wish people to be imprisoned for five, not three years. The Transport Act 1981 provides for six months' imprisonment plus a maximum fine of £2,000. They should both be far greater. I know that we shall do all that because we all care about motorists. The Government have made some excellent

[Mr. Peter Bruinvels]

proposals and responses to the Select Committee's recommendations. We shall make the roads safer. RoSPA has said that a great deal more must be done, and I agree. I know that the Government are firmly committed to making our roads safer.

1.36 pm

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): I seem to be becoming an addict of Friday debates. We must be dedicated enthusiasts for this calling because we frequently find ourselves sitting here for four hours before being called. We can be enthusiasts rather than tub-thumping ideologues, because we know that every speech will produce something new. Although there is a lamentable absence of the press on Friday mornings, the message will be read by those who care.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister, who does a difficult job within a difficult Department. People always say that their roads are too bad, too old, too late or too short. They forget that transport is about people rather than things. One of my hon. Friend's most telling comments was that the equivalent of five jumbo jet loads of people are killed or seriously injured on our roads each week, and yet our record is better than that of most other countries within the European Community.

After listening to the debate, one would think that road safety was confined to the problems of motorways and that all hon. Members were linked to one another by motorway. I am pleased to be able to say that I do not have one motorway in my constituency, but road safety is of great importance to me and my constituents.

The Select Committee's report and the Government's response to it have been referred to. I should like to emphasise one of the recommendations — that the Department of Transport should consider more advanced driving tests. I am aware that the Government are considering that. I am a member of the Institute of Advanced Motorists, like my hon. Friend the Minister of State and my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins). I am proud to be the president of the Salisbury Plain branch of the IAM. The reason that I became a member of that organisation may be an object lesson which others seek to follow. I did a deal with my mother. She said, "You can have the family car if you pass your advanced driving test." I did so, and I hope that I am a better driver for it.

I have one or two worries about road safety. The first relates to the problem of hand-held microphones on coaches. Our tourist guides—I declare an interest as vice-president of the association of Wessex tourist guides —are right to point out that one gets what one pays for with coach tours, and that drivers are good at driving, that tour guides are good at giving guided tours, and that the two should not mix. I know that that thought has occupied the minds of many people in previous years, but in a recent written answer my hon. Friend the Minister said:

"The conduct of coach drivers, including talking by them, is governed by the Public Service Vehicles (Conduct of Drivers, Conductors and Passengers) Regulations which date from 1936 and are currently under review."—[*Official Report*, 9 April 1984; Vol. 58, c. 27.]

Paragraphs 4 and 5 of those regulations state:

"A driver or a conductor, when acting as such . . .

(b) shall not smoke in or on a vehicle during a journey or when it has passengers on board;

(c) shall take all reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of passengers in or on or entering or alighting from the vehicle . . .

A driver . . . shall not when the vehicle is in motion speak to the conductor or any other person unless it is necessary to do so on grounds of safety."

If the law considers that it is unsafe to smoke while driving a coach, why in heaven's name does it not also consider it unsafe to hold a microphone and give a running commentary? There is nothing like personal experience to bring home a point. I was nearly smashed into by a coach in Salisbury earlier in the autumn while its driver was giving a running commentary. I feel strongly about the issue and beg the Minister to look into it again.

The burning question of in-car telephones follows from that. We see a great deal of advertising in the national press and on television about Cellnet and similar inovations which provide the facility to telephone when one is either moving or stationary. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he was satisfied with that. My hon. Friend the Minister replied:

"Drivers with in-car telephones should never use them whilst on the move. My Department's manual 'driving' advises that drivers should stop before making or receiving a call . . . there is at present no evidence to suggest that they are giving rise to any road safety hazard, but I shall be keeping a close watch on the situation."—[*Official Report*, 26 March 1985; Vol. 76, c. 111.]

It has been represented to me by my constituents and others that the present advertising of in-car telephones gives the impression that one can use them while driving. I do not have one. Indeed, the car is one of the few places where I can escape from the telephone, and one is better off weaving between the heavy lorries on the M3 on the way home without a telephone. That is another dangerous area of our life, and I beg the Minister to look into it.

Road safety, like transport, is about people, and people simply do not know the speed limits on derestricted roads. I sometimes wonder whether lorry drivers know them. Cars have a speed limit of 60 mph on single carriageways and 70 mph on other roads. Buses have a speed limit of 50 mph on single carriageways, 60 mph on dual carriageways, and 70 mph on motorways. But any lorry over 7·5 tonnes whether rigid or articulated, has a speed limit of 40 mph on single carriageways, 50 mph on dual carriageways and 60 mph on motorways. I cannot remember when I last saw a heavy lorry driving at less than 40 mph on our country roads in Wiltshire.

Our debate is not only about motorway driving. It should also be about education. I was advised by Wiltshire county constabulary, in response to my request to put advisory signs at the entrance to some of our more picturesque but hazardous villages on the A36, "But the county planning authority would never allow you to put up signs advising danger and a speed limit." The statutory 30 mph speed limit sign is woefully inadequate in the circumstances.

The British Road Federation document has been circulated to all Members of Parliament, no doubt at enormous cost. It is a beautiful, glossy document that must have cost about £5 per copy to produce. I have read it with great care, and I commend the British Road Federation for being an extremely effective lobbying organisation on behalf of the road transport industry. But from cover to cover of the document, one does not find a single mention of the driver and his responsibility for road safety and

everything else. I hear that the Department of Transport has distributed 23 million leaflets on lane-hogging in the past three years. That is just one aspect of the problem.

Although I have had a go at the British Road Federation and its document, I commend the high quality of most commercial drivers. However, I am reminded of the famous television series that featured the headgehog sandwich and the song, "Keep on trucking." That is too often the image of lorry drivers today. Recollecting the tenor of that programme, one might assume the creation of a new offence driving in an intimidating manner, because there is no doubt that people are frightened by heavy lorries. It is not only a matter of a driver being frightened and making bad judgments because a juggernaught is close behind him; the residents of villages through which those lorries thunder are frightened to walk along their streets. If they do, they will probably be showered by water as the lorries drive by. Heavy goods vehicles were responsible for 13,504 accidents involving personal injury last year.

Far be it for me to suggest that we should adopt the former Spanish system, with small coloured lights on the backs of heavy lorries so that the drivers can tell the following motorists when it is safe to overtake. That would be largely redundant in Britain, since it is usually a case of the lorry overtaking the car. We do not need that in Britain, but I must make the point that a car, a coach or a lorry is as safe as its driver. It comes back to personal responsibility. Villagers in my constituency are used to seeing lorries rumbling through their villages on a regular basis—as regular as the trains used to be on the Great Western railway. They can tell us that, at a certain moment, huge articulated lorries proudly bearing the names of well-known shops and chain stores will thunder through their villages.

Let me be specific. Rank Hovis's flour tankers go in convoy. Good food may cost less at Sainsbury's, but between Sainsbury's shops it costs a great deal in terms of human misery suffered by my constituents, who are shaken by those thundering juggernauts. Ski yoghourt is a lovely product, yet when the lorries carrying it thunder up and down the A303 and cause havoc in Winterbourne Stoke and other villages, I do not perceive the good image of Ski yoghourt. The lorries from Wincanton Transport carry small notices apologising for any delay and saying,

"By-passes will solve all this. Drive it home to your MP."

The Amey Roadstone corporation is in a good business: breaking up the roads so that it can rebuild them later.

I drove down the A338 behind a coach that went at more than 70 mph on a dual carriageway, more than 60 mph on a single carriageway, and entered the village of Downton, on its way to Bournemouth, at more than 50 mph. Perhaps I should not mention the name of that company, but the coach came from Cheshire. I regret to say that I have taken to task our National Bus Company, the Wilts and Dorset company, more than once for speeding, faulty lights and filthy exhaust fumes coming from its older vehicles. That is unusual for the Wilts and Dorset company, which is normally scrupulous about such matters. It all comes down to personal responsibility.

Resources for policing are already fully stretched. The Wiltshire county constabulary has told me that on one of the most dangerous roads, the A36, which joins Bristol to Poole and Southampton in commercial terms, there is a 15-mile stretch where the road is so bad that the police cannot safely overtake and pass a vehicle if it is speeding. That is not good enough. There is diversity of opinion among chief constables as to whether police cars should be marked. However, the commercial drivers know which counties have unmarked cars and which do not—they are the professionals.

Much of the solution is not up to the Minister, local action by the county surveyor or better engineering, all of which are contributing factors. It is up to management control and, inevitably, individual responsibility. I am proud of the Government's record on bypasses nationally. In the autumn statement, I was delighted to see in paragraph 2.19:

"Additional provision is made for capital spending on national and local roads, (£37 million in 1986-87 and £52 million in 1987-88 . . . and £20 million a year for local roads)."

That is good — we should encourage my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and ask him to give us more.

We are grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Salisbury bypass, which will be built after the statutory inquiries have been made. I hope that as part of that, our county and district councils will be able to sort out their squabble over the building of the Churchfields bridge, which would take most of the heavy traffic out of the centre of Salisbury.

My hon. Friend the Minister knows of the problem in my constituency. It is symptomatic of many other problems with bypasses. The little village of Steeple Langford is in the Wylye valley, which is known to local residents as "death valley", because it carries the A36. The villagers of Wylye, Steeple Langford, Stapleford, Stoford, Great Wishford and right down to Wilton suffer because of the A36. My hon. Friend has done a great deal to alleviate the problems of this road. However, Steeple Langford has still not had its problems solved. Letters have been to-ing and fro-ing for 10 years. I visited my hon. Friend last December, and the villagers have sent a petition to Parliament.

I must disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart), who said that the Department of Transport was negative and bureaucratic. I have not thought that, and I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) that one of the problems is that squabbles sometimes occur between Government Departments, notably the Treasury and the Department of Transport. The fault lies not with the Department of Transport, which wishes to get the best possible option for Steeple Langford, but with the Treasury. In its wisdom and with its economists and cost benefit analyses, it finds it hard to make up its mind whether it should agree to the best road for the community or the best road for the Treasury—the cheapest.

I beg my hon. Friend the Minister to look carefully at the length of time that the decision on one village road has taken. I cannot go on much longer saying that I am proud of my Government's record on bypass schemes when a community in my constituency has been waiting for 10 years for a solution.

Transport is about people—we all depend on road, rail and air transport. Village life depends on roads, but can also be killed by roads if they are not appropriate. My hon. Friend the Minister has a thankless task. I congratulate her on today's debate and on the wide range of issues that have been raised and on which I know that she will be commenting. I hope that hon. Members will agree that transport is about people.

1.54 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I congratulate my hon. Friend on the performance she has achieved of her role at the Department of Transport. She has always impressed me and other members of the Select Committee on Transport by her mastery of the subject of road safety and road transport generally.

I pay atribute — as many of my Select Committee colleagues have done—to the previous Chairman, Harry Cowans, who, as we know, passed away recently. He was an outstanding and great personality who did more than anyone else to teach me to respect my political opponents, and, indeed, even to like them. He enabled me to obtain winnings to the tune of £25. I got to know him so well, and the length of time for which he spoke, that when we had a sweepstake in the Standing Committee on the Local Government Bill, I won. I shall always have fond memories of him.

During the Select Committee's investigation into road safety, I had the pleasure of questioning my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I asked him what view he had as to the use of the road by the road user—whether it was a right or a privilege. He did not give a concise reply —I am not sure whether a reply to such a question could be made—but I believe that we all have a right to the privilege of using the roads. If we adopt that approach, surely it is true to say that, as with all privileges, if they are abused the right can be withdrawn. If motorists and road users generally understood that the use of the road system was a privilege, they would also understand that if they committed misdemeanours or bad conduct in the form of bad driving, they would be likely to lose the privilege of using the roads.

One way of tackling the problem of road safety is to make the punishment fit the crime. We should emphasise to the driver that, if he crosses the line between what we think is reasonable and unreasonable, he stands the chance of suffering a severe penalty — much more severe than he faces at the moment. Perhaps we can thereby establish the right framework within which to improve road safety still further.

I went to France with the Select Committee to see some representatives of the French transport ministry in Paris. I believe that we play the leading role in Europe and in the world in the promotion of road safety. One cannot really tell Frenchmen anything, but in our exchange of views with our French counterparts we were able to enlighten them as to the ways in which we tackle road safety. We were appalled at the way in which they have tackled the problem. They appear to be a decade or so behind us.

Mr. Higgins: And they drive on the wrong side of the road.

Mr. King: Yes; they also drive on the wrong side of the road.

With regard to coach travel, I was happy to hear that some restrictions are to be introduced shortly. I also look forward to steps being taken to improve coach construction. There is not only the initial impact on the vehicle in the event of an accident, but the secondary damage that is caused to the occupants as they are flung about the vehicle, as the roof collapses and seats come adrift. We considered the problem at some length in the Select Committee and considered several possibilities, such as the wearing of belts in the first six rows of seats, and stronger standards of coach construction.

During the debate I have had the opportunity to absorb the implications behind the fitting of speed limiters to coaches. My initial enthusiasm for the proposal has been somewhat mellowed as I have come to understand what it would mean on the M1, the M6, or any other motorway. It would mean the introduction of one class of vehicle with a controlled speed, which no other vehicle would have. Driving in a traffic flow of heavy goods vehicles on a motorway one might find that, because they were limited to 60 mph, they would be travelling at 70 mph and even higher on the down grades. From personal experience we all know that that would be likely. Because of the 10 per cent. error margin in speedometer readings, as we have already heard, they would be entitled to drive at perhaps 65 or 66 mph.

Therefore, coaches full of people would have a maximum speed of only 70 mph, and would be struggling to get past commercial vehicles which, on down grades, would be catching them up again. Meanwhile, ordinary car traffic would come up behind at up to 80 mph— illegally or legally. We have not yet had a clear answer on whether people are prosecuted for driving at up to 80 mph. Such people, driving at 78 or 79 mph, might come up behind a coach in the third lane duelling with and struggling to pass not just one but perhaps a whole column of commercial vehicles, all driving at around 60 to 65 mph. I said that I welcomed the restriction on coach speed, but I am certain that it would be truly worth while and safe only if there were mandatory governors on heavy goods vehicles as well. Otherwise, there would be the ludicrous situation that I have described. I urge caution before such a programme is implemented.

I have to defend the Select Committee's suggestion of an 80 mph trial speed limit for cars. As hon. Members will have read in the document, it was my suggestion. I fought long and hard for it, and in the end conceded the trial aspect of it. I do not go back on that suggestion, because, to have laws that will be obeyed by the motorist, one must have realistic laws.

Do we prosecute people who travel at 71 mph or do we allow them a 10 per cent. latitude? Do we say, "It is 80 mph really. We shall not bother with anyone who is travelling under that speed."? If that is so, the message that is going from the House to the motorist is that he is all right to travel at 80 mph. But if we impose a speed limit of 70 mph, it is wrong to allow people to travel at 80 mph. That is no formula for creating awareness and responsibility in obeying road safety laws.

If we have an 80 mph trial limit, car speedometers must be satisfactorily regulated. I do not know why they should not be part of the MOT test. I do not know why we should blithely accept errors of speed because of mechanical maladjustment. During our debate in Committee we said that an 80 mph limit would be a sensible increase, bearing in mind the fact that those travelling in the third lane are almost all travelling at that speed. Speed tests show that about 40 per cent. of motorists exceed the speed limit on motorways. However, they do not go as far as to state the percentage of motorists exceeding the speed limit in the third lane. From my experience, the answer must be about 75 to 80 per cent. I think that we have all experienced that on motorways. Therefore, an 80 mph limit is sensible. However, it has to be enforced. We must ensure that we mean 80 mph, and that, if motorists drive at 81 or 82 mph, they are severely punished. We should not mean 90 mph because we have allowed 80 mph.

Barely a day goes by without ever opening a newspaper or magazine and having it rammed down our throats how masculine and adrenalin-raising are the turbo-charged cars that are available today. Their performance is well advertised. I make no case for abolishing performance cars. Indeed, I am privileged to be sampling the delights of the Austin Rover Montego turbo, with a maximum speed of 127 mph and acceleration of 0 to 60 in about seven seconds. I have not experienced the 127 mph, but I have sampled the acceleration. The car is a delight to drive, but I am not here to advertise the fact. I am here to say that a car with such a performance, which is available to anyone who has passed his driving test, warrants some caution.

It has been said that if a person passes his driving test in a mini, he can drive a high performance car and be within the legal requirements. There is a danger in that. In hot-rod racing, a rookie or inexperienced driver has a white roof and an expert has a red roof. I am not suggesting that cars should have white roofs or red roofs, but we could have a two-tier driving test. A person could take the advanced test at his own cost—not with a subsidy—and be eligible to drive cars in certain insurance categories. He would have to submit to the insurance company the endorsement of his main driving licence showing that he was equipped to drive a certain car.

The Select Committee was concerned about drinking and driving. We were not satisfied with the minimum limit. We were especially concerned that drunken driving comes to the attention of the public to a great extent every year only at Christmas. However, the problem confronts us throughout the year. It is wrong that people can take a drug, such as alcohol, to excess and then get into a car, which is the most difficult contrivance for a human being to operate correctly. We are all entitled to drive this complicated machine with the minimum of training. We do not allow a drunk to drive a train or fly an aeroplane, but driving a car is left entirely to the voluntary responsibility of the driver. Woe betide him if he is involved in an accident and gets caught!

We must ensure that posters are displayed at all points of sale of alcohol advising motorists of the risks—a sort of alcoholic Factories Act. In every bar and club a notice could be displayed stating that, if, within a certain time, one consumes two pints of beer or a gin and tonic and half a lager, one should not drive a car in the next half hour or so. Admittedly, that is just a rule of thumb, but there is much criticsm because the average person can say, "It is all right. I drink a lot because I am used to it and because I am much bigger than certain other people" — for example, my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels). My hon. Friend might react differently if he was offered the same amount of alcohol as a 6ft 6in tall person. We should look closely at re-educating the drinker about the amount he may drink and his responsibilities.

I hope that greater emphasis will be placed on the cycling proficiency of school children. They cannot start to learn soon enough. It is too late at 10 to go on a cycling proficiency course. From five onwards children can ride a bicycle, as often as not on the pavement, but also on the road. We need to get youngsters involved in road safety from practically the moment they can walk. I look forward to that becoming a prominent part of road safety policy.

2.8 pm

Mrs. Chalker: By leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Many varied and useful suggestions have been made, and it is inevitable that at 2.8 pm I cannot reply to every hon. Member. I shall write to all those who have raised points to which I do not have time to respond.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) was right when talking about the use of the road system. I would, however, phrase it rather differently. Using our road system places an enormous responsibility on every driver. The word "privilege" is misunderstood, which is why I put it in those terms. In many cases, it is up to the driver whether an accident is avoided.

Let me put my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) out of his misery. I am sure that within a short time the A36 will be a safer road. I hope to make an announcement in a few weeks.

I do not expect the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) to know it, but we have undertaken a wholescale review of signing. It is not limited to tourist signing but encompasses the problem encountered by drivers in the centre or offside lane of a motorway being unable to see the first sign because of heavy goods vehicles in the inside lane.

Too many drivers start their journeys without having worked out where they will get on or get off a motorway or where they will change roads and with insufficient time to complete their journeys. Several hon. Members have mentioned that problem. My Department must also do those things which prevent accidents from being worse than they might have been. That is why I have undertaken a review of safety fencing. Hon. Members from Devon and some other counties might be aware of it. We are examining barriers and the conditions in which we use them to establish the best way in which to avoid crossover accidents.

I have also been worried by unnecessary coning. The matter is sometimes treated as a joke, but to me it is serious. We have not always had the right coning in the right places, so we have issued new guidance to the agent authorities, especially in respect of small road works. These are not the big road works about which newcasters sometimes make bad jokes. It is these smaller road works that often catch drivers unaware, so we have asked the agent authorities to avoid the unnecessary coning off of lanes and to make coning much clearer.

Few things are more aggravating than being caught in a traffic jam caused by a lane closure for which there is no apparent reason. I am considering the provision of information about lane closures. We do not want too much on roads, but people appreciate knowing why they have been slowed down. We have made major improvements in the signing of major road works and contraflow arrangements are much better, but small road works signing has not been so good. We are trying to provide more information if road works are to go on for some time.

I have also considered road lighting, which the right hon. Member for Dudley, East and my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) mentioned. I announced yesterday that, following the Select Committee on Transport's recommendations on motorway lighting, the review had been completed. I shall start consultation

[Mrs. Chalker]

next week on the revised policy for lighting on motorways and trunk roads. I am pleased that those who have heard about that policy have welcomed it warmly.

Perhaps I should say something about the lighting of the M25 and related costs. When completed, the M25 will be 117 miles long, 40 miles of which will definitely be lit. That is a higher percentage than the average—34 per cent. I am aware of the concerns of hon. Members about that. The ducting is in place for additional lighting to be installed. That is being considered as part of the further review that I have been undertaking, and to which I referred in my opening remarks, as a result of our study into the most fog-prone areas.

In considering matters about which drivers should be warned, we all have a part to play, particularly in relation to the "keep your distance" technique. Much has been said in the debate about speed and the best action that we can take. The police confirm that one of the most common faults among drivers is the failure to stay sufficiently behind the vehicles in front of them.

There is the two-second rule—it is a simple aid to judging the eparation distance—of one yard for each mile per hour. It can be practised by a driver or passenger. One selects an easily identifiable mark on the road ahead and, as the vehicle in front passes, it, one says at a slow speaking rate, "One and two and" and so on, or "One second, two seconds" and so on. If one passes the mark before finishing saying that, one is too close.

That is a simple rule of thumb, and I appreciate that keeping the correct distance away may be annoying if another driver cuts in front of one. Nevertheless, if we follow the "keep your distance" rule, more will be done to save lives and prevent accidents than any other action of which I can think.

Much has been said in the debate about the 80 mph limit recommended by the Select Committee. We reviewed carefully the limit last year, and I have reviewed it again. I am also aware that many people would be extremely worried if we made that change. I believe that cars and other vehicles already go fast enough at 70 mph, and neither my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State nor I feel that it would be right to alter it. While that decision may sadden some hon. Members, that puts the issue at rest for at least another year.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northfield and others referred to safety standards for coaches. We have a good safety record, but we shall do all we can further to improve it, and the international standard that we are developing for the coach roof strength will be the protection that is needed for passengers in roll-over accidents. We are also examining fire retardant materials and a requirement for seat belts for some of the most vulnerable seat positions.

I was careful earlier, when saying that we were to consult about the fitting of speed governors to coaches, to say that we know that there had been technical problems. We appreciate that unless governors can be made tamper-proof, there could be further problems. However, in my view we are proceeding along the right lines, and only one hon. Member, having considered the issue, voiced doubts about the wisdom of what we propose.

Heavy goods vehicles do less of their mileage on motorways than do high-speed coaches. By and large, they are not as prevalent breakers of their limit as coaches seem to have been. I hope that those in the road haulage lobby will take away from this debate the knowledge that, if they do not put their house in order, they may receive similar treatment in the future.

I hope it will not be necessary to take a similar step because road haulage drivers are, generally, very safe. If they would only signal rather earlier, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) pointed out, those who sometimes have unpleasant words to say about lorries would cease to say them.

My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory), who has had to leave to attend another engagement, spoke about the quality of tyres. It would not be practical for customs officers to inspect tyres as they came into the country, but under the construction and use regulations attached to the Consumer Safety Act it is an offence to sell or use substandard tyres. We are monitoring the regulations carefully.

I was asked about bumper heights by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing. We have checked again today with the Transport and Road Research Laboratory. A set of guidelines for vehicle designers, including recommendations about bumper heights, has been drawn up and a demonstration car has been produced. The United Kingdom is seeking international agreement, and discussions are due to take place early in the new year.

I was asked about the netting of loads, particularly sugar-beet. We have recently issued a revised code of practice on the safety of loads. It is already an offence to use a vehicle with a load which might cause damage to other road users.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) was unhappy about the division between serious and slight accidents. I agree that there is a problem, but we are dependent upon the assessment of the policeman at the scene. The Transport and Road Research Laboratory has made great efforts to link accident data with hospital data, but there are ethical considerations. Trying to match data without identifying individuals is difficult. We have done that with some Scottish hospital data, and the research laboratory is seeking to extend that to areas in England and Wales. Medical confidentiality is the problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham also made some comments about statistics and the cost of hospital services. I am a statistician by training so I should like to give the figures, but it is difficult to get at the real facts. We gave the facts as we had them to the Select Committee. If we get more accurate figures, we shall publish them.

Many hon. Members have referred to the so-called people issues. My hon. Friend the member for Northfield talked about driver concentration and my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury about coaches and their guides. In trying to improve our road safety record we are trying to persuade drivers to concentrate better. They must drive with undivided attention if they are to remain safe.

The use of microphones and radio telephones cause concern. Problems are caused when drivers use two-way radio systems or provide a commentary. We have considered this matter carefully and have concluded that, in view of the evident risk that distraction may lead to danger, stronger action is needed.

I shall be holding consultations as soon as possible on amendments to the Highway Code which in particular will state that drivers should not use hand-held microphones or telephone sets while their vehicles are moving and that

they should speak into other kinds of microphone only when road conditions are such that their attention will not be distracted.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has already told the Bus and Coach Council that the Department will be enforcing the existing PSV conduct regulations to prevent coach drivers from giving sustained sightseeing commentaries. He proposes to amend the regulations to permit brief announcements to passengers, which are often helpful, as well as operational emergency communications. However, there will be a specific ban on sustained and regular sightseeing commentaries. Those measures will improve driver concentration and be widely welcomed. I can only repeat what I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield earlier in the year about car telephones. People should not use them when they are driving. The car should be stationary and in a safe place.

Mr. Snape: What is the position for a driver on a motorway if someone calls him? He cannot stop. Is he supposed not to answer the telephone?

Mrs. Chalker: He will have to leave the motorway by the next available exit, if the phone is still ringing when he gets there. That is the only safe way.

Mr. Snape: The hon. Lady might be ringing the Secretary of State.

Mrs. Chalker: I do not think that I shall be using telephones in that way very often, and certainly not to ring others. Even my right hon. Friend deserves some peace occasionally.

Also on the people issue, I want to deal with a point raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing and by other hon. Members concerning motor cycle couriers. Although I did not feel able to respond positively to the bumper sticker idea when he raised it, I am extremely concerned about motor cycle couriers. That is why I am referring to Dr. North, who has undertaken the road traffic law review, the question whether we should have an offence for employers when an employee is convicted of a road traffic offence. We want to get the reputable firms joined by the disreputable ones who must make sure that they set their own house in order. We will be having a conference to identify what can best be done and I am grateful to Dave Taylor for agreeing to organise it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham asked a number of questions about statistics. I will let him have the figures in writing; it would be slightly complicated to go into the matter in the debate.

I genuinely feel that at present it would not be practicable to carry out part of the driving test on dual carriageways. That may be convenient for those of us in the south or near conurbations with dual carriageways that we use regularly, but one does not have to go far to find areas where the driving test centre is a long way from a dual carriageway.

Although the driving test has not changed the techniques that a learner should have to pass the test, it has certainly become much more complex on today's roads. That is why I am not surprised that fewer than 50 per cent. of people pass the test. We are looking at that issue and in time I shall give the House more information about driver testing and improvements to it.

One recommendation that I give without hesitation is that, however good a driver one thinks one is, preparation for an advanced driving test will teach something and it can be learnt again if one returns for a retest. That would produce a better driver and probably a lower fuel consumption for his or her car. Everybody should be encouraged to take the advanced driving test.

Hon. Members have raised the subject of the drink driving campaign but I shall not go into that in detail. I listened with great care to what they said and we shall be looking not only at the experiences of last year but at the new campaign, which will not cease after Christmas, because drunken drivers take to the road all the time and must be stopped.

I understand the desire for better enforcement. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has set in hand work to assess whether there are specific needs for further increases in police resources. He is also ready to consider applications from the provincial police authorities for increases in police establishment on the basis of demonstrated need. I shall continue to discuss the matter with the Home Office because it is important that our laws are enforced.

There can be no let-up in the fight. It is not a fight only for the Government, local government and RoSPA. Every one of us who goes on the road, whether on foot or wheels, can prevent one person from being killed or maimed each day. It is up to every driver to slow down and to keep his distance—

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Public Telephone Boxes

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise a subject which affects the constituencies of all hon. Members. The Order Paper gives the title of the debate as "public call box services", but really I wish to discuss the condition and unworkability of public phone boxes.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for attending to hear what I have to say. He serves his west midlands constituency of Coventry, South-West as hard and effectively as I try to serve mine.

Incidents of vandalism and unworkability of telephone boxes, even in rural Mid-Staffordshire, which encompasses a cathedral city and two small residential towns, are horrifyingly high. Between one in two and two in three public phone boxes on housing estates, in town centres and in villages do not work. The main causes are sheer, wanton vandalism and mindless, senseless hooliganism.

Throughout the nation, there are 76,500 red telephone boxes. They are part of our national scene, yet, despite the fact that British Telecom provides a magnificant service to its customers and makes a welcome and healthy profit for its subscribers and shareholders, the public telephone service makes a loss of £77·4 million. Part of that loss must be attributable to the fact that the service is not adequately monitored.

There are 10,600 public phone boxes in London. Last year, there were on average 5,000 acts of vandalism to public phone boxes each month and the cost of repairing phone boxes in London was £1 million. A survey carried out for the *Daily Mail* earlier this year showed that only 37 of 100 London phone boxes worked. In Newcastle, nine of 25 boxes worked, in Glasgow and Liverpool 10 of 25 boxes were in operation and even in Birmingham only 14 of the 25 phone boxes inspected—56 per cent.—were in operation.

My anxiety is for people who live on housing estates and cannot afford private telephones. I think particularly of elderly people to whom the public phone box down the road may be a lifeline.

When television came into our lives a few years ago, we used to see a picture of the mast at Sutton Coldfield round which we saw the sign:

"Nation shall speak . . . unto nation."

For my elderly constituents, the public phone box enables family to speak unto family.

How will an elderly person who wants to contact a doctor late at night be persuaded to go out and make an urgent call, perhaps even a 999 call? The chances are that such a person would not find a phone box that worked. Even if he or she did, the light would probably be smashed, the glass would probably be broken and the door would probably be off its hinges. If, by chance, the prospective caller does not know the number that he wants to dial, the chance of finding a directory in the phone box will be about one in a thousand.

I know that British Telecom has done its best to encourage the public to take a responsible attitude. I shall quote from a magazine which Sir George Jefferson's own office sent me today. It sets out the initiative which British Telecom has introduced, which is known as "Watch a box". One passage reads:

"The Chairman, Sir George Jefferson, took the initiative when he decided to check out a payphone on his way to work each day — now everyone wants to join in. The entire management board in BTL North West has elected to watch a box, while in BTL South West staff at all levels are taking part in a scheme run in conjunction with their area newspaper *Connection*.

Whether they are walking the dog or travelling to and from work, staff have been asked, through the newspaper, to drop in and check out a payphone.

If the payphone is not working, has been damaged or the notices or lighting are defective, then they can ring in on a special number to report the problem."

I do not think that that goes to the heart of the problem. There must be a partnership between local offices of British Telecom, local councils and local police forces. The telephone boxes should be inspected regularly and monitored at irregular times of the day and night with a view to trying to catch the vandals red-handed in the red telephone boxes. When caught, they should be brought to account in the courts. The fines meted out to them by the justices should be realistic and should dissuade them from ever embarking on a career of vandalism which might lead to worse crime in future.

I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to use his influence with his ministerial colleagues. I suggest that he urges his ministerial colleagues in the Home Office to issue a directive to magistrates to ensure that when the vandals are caught the fines meted out to them by the magistrate bear a direct relationship to the cost of making good the wanton damage. The fine should be two, four or five times the cost of making good the damage. That will go some way to reducing the horrendous deficit of £77·4 million which the public part of British Telecom has to bear.

It is no good British Telecom saying, "We have the problem under control." I shall quote from an article which appeared in *British Business* on 2 August. Part of it read:

"British Telecom claim that their new telephone kiosks will improve the situation. They point out that during 1984 there were more than 5,000 cases of damage to payphones every month in London alone, affecting almost half of London's 10,650 payphone boxes, costing £1 million a year to repair. The new payphones are apparently much less vulnerable to vandalism. The extra degree of lighting will be a deterrent to vandals who are discouraged by high visibility."

I do not believe that to be so. A vandal will vandalise light or dark, day or night. The article continues:

"The open-plan design and robust materials—stainless steel or anodised aluminium—will be difficult to damage."

If he is so minded, a vandal will damage. Even if he does not damage the telephone system itself, he will inflict damage on the casing or the red boxes.

There is the idea that we should do away with the red boxes, which are so much part of our national life. Instead, we shall see installed a sort of Cape Canaveral cone into which my elderly constituents, for example, can make their calls after struggling down the street at the dead of night or in the heart of winter. The cones will not provide the shelter that the red boxes afford.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for being in his place to answer the debate. I hope that he will take on board some of my comments, which I hope also will be considered to be constructive. If he does, I believe that his constituents and mine will be eternally grateful.

2.38 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle), as I know the House will be, for raising this important topic on the Adjournment of the House. I am sure that everything he said reflects the opinion of many paeople who are bewildered by this apparently mindless phenomenon which goes on in our midst. He has raised a subject of considerable interest. I am aware that he has taken a great interest in public call box services for a long time. I congratulate him on his pursuit of his campaign and his single-minded and highly-motivated approach.

My hon. Friend will be aware that British Telecom operates under a licence issued by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Under the terms of the Telecommunications Act 1984, the licence obliges BT, among many other things, to provide public call box services throughout the country. I should emphasise that monitoring and enforcement of BT's compliance with the terms of its licence is a matter for the Director-General of Telecommunications. The 1984 Act gives him substantial independent powers in that regard. Enforcement of the licence is not a matter for Ministers, and any remarks that I make in this debate must be said with that clearly in mind.

I know that the Director-General of Telecommunications is keenly interested in the question of public call box services and maintains a close watch on the level and adequacy of the service provided by BT. I shall ensure that what my hon. Friend has had to say in this debate is brought to the Director-General's attention.

There are about 76,000 public payphones in the country. Those telephones provide a vital public service. That service is not only for the 23 per cent. of households which do not have the use of a telephone of their own, but for all of us when out and about. We all depend on public payphones. When they are out of order, it is always a matter of inconvenience, but sometimes it can be a matter of life and death. That is why the issue is of great public interest.

I know that British Telecom takes its obligations to provide public call box services seriously. The company faces two major problems. One will soon, I hope, be overcome; the other is being tackled vigorously, but is much more deep-seated. I shall return to my hon. Friend's remarks about that later. The problems are first, old equipment, and secondly, vandalism; or, to put it more bluntly, crime. That, I regret to say, is the fundamental issue. For example, last year in London alone there were 5,000 cases a month of damage to public payphones, affecting almost half the capital's 10,650 payphones.

Those two problems are being tackled as part of a major investment programme by British Telecom to modernise its telephone services. That will, when complete, make British Telecom's public payphone service the most modern of its kind in the world. I understand that by March 1987 all existing equipment will have been replaced by new, push-button electronic equipment. Such installations are already a familiar sight in many places. The new telephones are more reliable and much more versatile. For example, they will all have automatic fault reporting so that if there is any trouble, repairs can be done swiftly. They also take a wider range of coins. There will be no more frustration if we cannot find a 10p piece. That will have a considerable impact on the quality of the service provided.

A key feature of the modernisation programme is the aim to "design out" all those features in the old style boxes which are prone to criminal damage or which make attack by vandals easier. Considerable research has gone into that. As hon. Members will surely have noticed, as well as new telephone equipment, new booths are beginning to be installed. Gradually they will replace the old ones, except where conservation for environmental reasons is necessary. They have many new features designed to minimise their vulnerability to crime and make it harder to put them out of service.

My hon. Friend dealt with some of those features and expressed understandable cynicism. No matter how robust the new installations may be, someone will find some way of attacking and damaging them. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that it is legitimate for British Telecom to seek to design out some of the more vulnerable features of the installations. However, if a vandal is prepared to apply a manic level of strength with the object of destroying something, of course damage can be done.

The real deterrent to such acts is part and parcel of the wider issues to which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has recently drawn attention so eloquently—the reaffirmation of the traditional values of family, school and church, which teach young people to behave in a civilised manner. We must get the message across that criminal damage to public payphones is thoughtless, stupid behaviour which, at the very least, causes inconvenience to others, and at the worst, real danger. I am sure that my hon. Friend and, indeed, all hon. Members will endorse that.

My hon. Friend has been pursuing his campaign in the northern part of the west midlands, and he mentioned another campaign being pursued by BT. He will agree that the campaign must be for every individual, if we are to get to the root of the problem.

In response to my hon. Friend's remarks, I wish to make observations, which in part must be questions. Why is this particular form of vandalism apparently unique to Britain? To the best of my knowledge it does not happen on anything like the same scale in the rest of the Western world. Why are British vandals so mindless that they will attack a public facility which they themselves may need one day? Even the most woolly-minded behavioural scientist would not attempt to depict a phone box as a symbol of authority or as an affront to those who suffer from deprivation. This form of behaviour is beyond comprehension. It is as incomprehensible as the physical attacks on St. John Ambulance nurses while they attended injured fans during a soccer riot at Birmingham City football ground at the end of last Session. People who wish to destroy a public facility, through no other motive than a wish to wreck something, are beneath contempt.

BT and the Director-General of Telecommunications unfortunately have to deal with another symptom of the growth of the propensity for mindless destruction among a small proportion of the population. My hon. Friend and I are agreed that it is up to each individual member of society to accept his or her responsibilities in changing the attitudes and levels of behaviour. In the long run, that is the only way in which to deal with this symptom of a broader and worrying phenomenon.

[Mr. John Butcher]

My hon. Friend has done the House a great service. He has articulated a problem which arouses great anxiety throughout the country. I have noted what he said about the efforts to liaise between post offices, BT, the police force and local authorities, and the advice that he would seek to have handed to magistrates to ensure that fines are levied in a way which reflects the cost of making good the damage inflicted. I assure him that the record will be distributed to the appropriate opinion formers. I have pleasure in congratulating him again on the timeliness of his intervention today.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Twelve minutes to Three o'clock pm.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 7 November 1985

SCOTLAND

Salmon

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what salmon legislation he proposes to bring forward in this Session of Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: The main element of the Bill will be the improvement of the present salmon management arrangements in Scotland providing for changes in the structure and composition of district salmon fishery boards, and revision of the powers relating to the regulation of salmon fisheries in Scotland; updating and strengthening of anti-poaching measures.

It has been clear for some time that Scottish salmon legislation is in need of updating not only as an incentive to increase the number of district boards in Scotland but to make the boards more democratic, in relation for example to membership. The Bill will deal with this and will also modernise procedures, particularly as they affect the powers of the Secretary of State and district boards for the regulation of salmon fisheries, to introduce greater flexibility to meet changing circumstances and needs, for example in relation to conservation of stocks.

Account will also be taken of the concern about the current extent of salmon poaching throughout Great Britain by introducing further provisions in relation to the possession of illegally taken salmon. The Bill will also provide for the introduction of a salmon dealer licensing scheme in Scotland, but will not include provisions relating to a salmon tagging scheme, for the reasons set out in my right hon. Friend's reply today to my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow).

HOME DEPARTMENT

Road Traffic Offences (Fixed Penalties)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to implement part III of the Transport Act 1982 for extended fixed penalties for road traffic offences.

Mr. Hurd: I intend to implement part III of the Act on 1 October 1986. This date will allow a reasonable period for police training and other preparations after the implementation of the major provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act on 1 January 1986.

I propose meanwhile to make an order increasing the existing fixed penalty of £10 to £12 early in the new year to take account of inflation since it was last fixed in 1982. I also propose that the higher level of fixed penalty, which will only operate under the new system, should be £24.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Burnham Committee

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has completed his review of the teachers' panel of the Burnham primary and secondary committee; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes. I have decided that the National Union of Teachers should be represented by 13 instead of 16 members and that the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education should cease to be represented on the committee. The new composition of the committee will be as follows:

	Number
Management Panel	
Association of County Councils	13
Association of Metropolitan Authorities	10
Welsh Joint Education Committee	2
Department of Education and Science	2
Teachers' Panel	
Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association	4
National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers	7
National Union of Teachers	13
Professional Association of Teachers	1
National Association of Head Teachers	2
Secondary Heads Association	1

I have suggested to the committee that, in order to preserve the working relationship between the Primary and Secondary and Further Education committees, it should use its rules of procedure to grant NATFHE non-voting observer status.

In order to comply with the requirements of the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965, two variations to the determination of 19 January 1981 have been prepared to give effect to the changes. The variation determination to give effect to the change in NUT representation was made on 1 November and came into operation on 5 November. A copy has been placed in the Library. The variation order to give effect to the proposal to remove the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education from the committee was made by statutory instrument on 1 November, will be laid before Parliament on 11 November to come into operation on 2 December.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Servants (Immunity)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on his policy regarding civil servants' immunity from prosecution for small scale theft or fraud at work.

Mr. Luce: I welcome the opportunity to correct the false impression which may have been given recently that civil servants are to enjoy a special immunity from prosecution for criminal offences.

The new draft disciplinary guidelines which have been drawn up pay particular regard to the Public Accounts Committee's criticisms in 1984 of the Property Services Agency's handling of fraud cases, as requested by Ministers. These guidelines are still at the consultative stage. They are emphatically not seeking to confer any special immunity on civil servants. Rather their aim is to

speed up the handling of disciplinary cases by Departments and bring Civil Service procedures more into line with those in the private sector. To this end there is provision for Departments, where appropriate, to handle very minor cases of theft or deception without involving the police. As in the private sector, it may in some circumstances be better for Departments to deal with the matter expeditiously themselves rather than institute lengthy criminal proceedings at high cost to the taxpayer. This would also allow Departments if necessary to change systems promptly to prevent a recurrence.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Building Society Legislation

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make a further statement about the proposed building society legislation referred to in the Gracious Speech.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I announced the main proposals at Eastbourne in June. Decisions have now been reached on the main outstanding matters.

The Government have decided to create a new Building Societies Commission which will have responsibility for the prudential supervision of the societies. The present Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies will be chairman of the new commission. The names of the other commissioners will be announced in due course.

Like the Registry of Friendly Societies at present, the registry and commission will together constitute one of my right hon. Friend's departments.

The Bill will introduce new provisions governing mergers between building societies. One society will be able to apply for access to the register of another's members for the sole purpose of circulating merger proposals. But new regulations will be introduced governing bonus payments to members and compensation to outgoing directors on mergers; and a new requirement will be introduced in mergers between societies of very different sizes to the effect that at least 20 per cent. of members of the smaller society eligible to vote on the special resolution in question should vote in favour. The Government will be publishing at the same time as the Bill a consultative document about the procedures under which building societies could be converted into companies with the approval o their membership.

Further proposals include the introduction of a statutory investor protection scheme along the lines of that under the Banking Act, 1979; a procedure for independent appeal against supervisory decisions of the commission, again broadly reflecting that under the Banking Act; limits on loans to directors and connected persons as for recognised banks under the Companies Act; new requirements on directors to disclose interests along the lines of those applying to company directors, with additional requirements for directors with interests in firms with which borrowers from the society may be doing business as part of the transaction; there will be a new requirement for each society to have a memorandum which will be the basic source of its adopted powers, alongside the rules which govern its internal management; new procedures under which the commission will be able to determine whether an activity is within the powers of a society; and restriction of the present exemption from the Consumer Credit Act of building society mortgage lending to loans made on first mortgage only for the purchase, improvement of repair of property.

Details of these further proposals are contained in my speech made at Little Wymondley on 1 November, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Cable and Wireless

Mr. Lester asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on the sale of the Government's shareholding in Cable and Wireless.

Mr. Moore: Cable and Wireless plc announced earlier today that it intends to raise additional equity capital at the same time as the Government sell their remaining ordinary shares in the company. Subject to market conditions, it is expected that the joint offer will take place in December. the Government have confirmed to the company that they will not be taking up that portion of the company's new shares to which they would have been entitled to subscribe.

The Government will be retaining the special rights preference share in the company. This requires the consent of Her Majesty's Government, as holder of the special share, to certain events such as the voluntary winding-up of the company, material disposal of assets, the creation or issue of shares with voting rights different from those of the ordinary shares, and to changes in certain articles of the company, including those which limit the shareholdings of any one person together with those of his associates to not more than 15 per cent. of the issued ordinary share capital. The Government have agreed that they should no longer be exempt from the 15 per cent. limit on individual shareholdings following the sale of its shares.

The Government also have the right under the company's articles to appoint two non-executive directors and they have agreed that it will no longer be appropriate for them to have this right once they cease to be an ordinary shareholder.

THE ARTS

Cash Limits

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Minister for the Arts if it is intended to change any of the cash limits for which he is responsible.

Mr. Luce: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Winter Supplementary Estimates, I propose to increase the 1985-86 cash limit on Class V, Vote 8 (Victoria and Albert Museum) by £100,000 from £10,598,000 to £10,698,000. The net increase is required to assist with the cost of setting up the Theatre Museum, thus enabling it to open in 1986-87, as previously announced. The expenditure will be met by an equivalent saving on Class V, Vote 10 (Arts, the Arts Council and other institutions, the National Heritage and the Government Art Collection) reducing the cash limit from £129,777,000 to £129,677,000. There will, therefore, be no net increase in the total of public expenditure.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Salmon

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has completed his examination of the implications of establishing a salmon tagging scheme and his review of the arrangements for controlling the north-east drift net salmon fishery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Government share the widely expressed concern about the illegal taking of salmon in our rivers and coastal waters. We therefore, as my predecessor announced on 29 February 1984 in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), instructed officials of the Fisheries Departments to examine methods of combating this illegal taking and in particular to discuss with the various interests concerned the proposals for a salmon tagging scheme set out in the report "Salmon Conservation — A New Approach" prepared by the salmon sales group of the former National Water Council.

Unfortunately, the tagging scheme, despite its attractions, presented major difficulties. The main problem areas were, as my predecessor said in reply to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) on 6 March 1985, the control of imports, the handling of our own farmed salmon and control over the issue of tags. The great majority of our trade in salmon consists of imports and farm production and no tagging scheme could be effective which excluded these fish. To ensure that all imported and farmed salmon were tagged would present substantial practical difficulties which, even if they could be overcome, would result in onerous burdens on fish farmers and traders. The control over the issue and use of perhaps 2-3 million tags a year also presents considerable difficulties. If control was not clearly established and a black market in unused tags developed, this would undermine the whole purpose of the scheme.

After an extensive examination of the possibilities we consider that, on the evidence before us, a tagging scheme would not be viable in Great Britain. We have therefore examined other possible methods of controlling salmon sales. We have concluded, first, that it is not acceptable for trade in illegally taken salmon to continue as a legal activity, which it is at present. We therefore propose to bring forward measures to make it illegal. In so doing we expect to remove the main outlets for illegally taken salmon and so make a major contribution to deterring illegal fishing.

Secondly, we have examined the possibility of licensing dealers in salmon as a measure to assist in controlling sales. We have concluded that in England and Wales the additional administrative structure required would not be justified in terms of the additional deterrent to illegal fishing, taking account of the complex trading conditions, including the large volume of trade in places remote from the salmon fishing areas. In Scotland, where the administrative structure and pattern of trade are different, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State proposes to bring forward a measure to permit the introduction of dealer licensing. This, together with the measures to counter trade in illegal salmon, will be contained in the draft Bill, the main elements of which my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Scottish Office has described in his reply today to my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst).

The Government have also completed the review of future arrangements for the English north east coast salmon drift net fishery which my predecessor announced on 29 February 1984. We have concluded that there is no case for terminating the fishery, but that the rules under which it operates should be further tightened in a number of respects. The Northumbrian and Yorkshire water authorities, who are responsible for regulating the fishery, have agreed with us that the following changes should be made, subject where appropriate to parliamentary approval.

The present system under which licensed fishermen may enter on their licences the names of duly authorised servants or agents (popularly known as endorsees), who may then use the licensed net to fish, will be modified to provide that the licensed fisherman must be present whenever his net is being fished, except when the licensee is suffering from genuine illness or injury. To restrict the fishing effort further, the fishery should be closed for a period of eight hours at night. The weekend closed periods, which at present vary between the areas of the fishery, will be standardised on the longest period now in force — that is 6 pm Friday to 6 am Monday. These measures will have a significant effect on the amount of effort devoted to the fishery and will assist the water authorities in their enforcement duties.

In addition, it is proposed to take measures to change the balance of fishing effort between drift nets and the fixed nets which are known as T or J nets. The Northumbrian water authority has sought an order permitting the use by licensees of T nets in its southern area, where they are currently banned, and its request has been accepted. The authority is to study the structure of its licence duties with a view to offering a financial inducement to fishermen who may be prepared to use only these fixed nets. The Yorkshire water authority, which operates a different licensing system, proposes to reduce the number of drift nets operated in its area from 29 to 22 and correspondingly increase the number of fixed nets from 32 to 39. This adjustment will not deprive existing licence holders of their rights to a drift net; the change will occur as existing licensees give up their licences.

It is our intention to take the necessary steps to introduce these measures as soon as possible. We consider that they will permit even tighter control over what is already a generally well-regulated fishery and we believe they will provide a sound basis for its future, while recognising that some of the measures will reduce incomes in an area which has already seen its fishing activity cut back. We shall review the effects of the new arrangements after they have been in operation for three years.

Agriculture Industry (Government Provision)

Mr. Couchman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is now able to announce the results of his discussions with the agriculture industry about the scope for raising revenue for services provided to it by Government as a contribution to the planned public expenditure cuts, indicating, in particular, the extent to which his proposals will be implemented in the legislation foreshadowed in the Gracious Speech.

Mr. Jopling: On 24 May at column *582* I outlined my approach to industry funding of advisory and statutory work and research and development. Consultations have confirmed that, as far as the funding of relevant research and development is concerned, a system of sectoral contributions is the right way forward, and provisions to assist this are included in the Agriculture Bill presented today. My further statement of 23 July at column *448* initiated discussions with the industry about the overall scope for raising revenue for advisory and statutory work as a contribution to reducing the net cost of such work by about £16½ million in the financial year 1987-88. I indicated that I would be looking for contributions from three sources — income from charging for advisory work, income from charging for statutory work and economies in the operation of ADAS.

In the light of those discussions, I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales have now concluded that, in 1987-88, we can look for a contribution of at least £5 million from charging for ADAS advisory and promotional work. Under the power proposed in clause 1 of the Agriculture Bill, presented today, we plan to make charges for advisory services hitherto provided free of charge to individuals and organisations and to groups of farmers acting in association. Some new charges, notably for the kind of work presently carried out under the agricultural services scheme, will be introduced shortly after the passage of the Bill; other charging schemes will be initiated during the second half of 1986-87. Meanwhile discussions will continue with interested parties on systems and levels of charging. ADAS will also be using existing opportunities, including the agricultual services scheme, to assess market responses to the introduction of new services and to modest price adjustments. It is hoped to make further announcements on this shortly. We do not however have any plans to introduce charges for the kind of advice now provided to farmers free of charge on conservation, rural diversification or animal welfare.

Turning to charges for other services, a range of possibilities was considered in discussions with interested organisations over the summer. In the light of the views expressed, we have decided against introducing charges for tuberculosis and brucellosis testing work and for enforcement of horticultural marketing standards. So far as plant health is concerned, charges will be introduced only in respect of export and import licensing and certification. We shall also be introducing, or increasing, charges to recover the cost of the following services provided by our Departments: inspections under the milk and dairy regulations, the new approval system for pesticides, licences and approvals for artificial insemination, the licensing of swill feeders, the poultry health scheme, the pig health scheme, the enzootic bovine leucosis attested herd scheme, the maedi-visna accredited flock scheme and the enforcement of seed regulations. We also intend to increase charges for plant breeders' rights and the national listing of varieties. In most cases the new charges will take effect in April 1987. We expect them to yield about £6 million net in 1987-88. In most cases, no new statutory powers to introduce charges are needed; but the new plant health and increased seed certification charges require new statutory powers which are sought in clauses 2 and 3 of the Agriculture Bill. There will be further discussions with interested parties on the arrangements for implementing the new charges and on our intention to introduce charges for the non-statutory advice given to local authorities in respect of agricultural development cases.

These measures will have an impact on the work and organisation of ADAS, as envisaged in the report prepared for me by its Director General which was published in November 1984. We believe that there is likely to be a strong, continuing demand once charges have been introduced for the expert independent advice provided by ADAS. The future of the service is not in doubt and we intend that it should be adequately staffed to earn the revenue that it is capable of bringing in. At the same time, there is scope for economies and improvements in efficiency, and these must be made if ADAS is to fulfil its changing role. ADAS currently has some 4,800 staff. Initial work on activities other than R & D, where savings were announced on 11 October, has shown there is scope for economies and, given follow up work to identify savings in other areas, we expect by the spring of 1987 to be able to reduce the size of ADAS by about 380 more posts along with appropriate savings in non-ADAS support staff. The final figure will in part depend on a closer assessment of the likely effect on uptake of charging for certain demand elastic schemes. Further details will be announced as soon as possible.

In financial terms, staff and related overhead savings of the order indicated above should, along with the expected additional revenue for charging, reduce the net cost of ADAS in the financial year 1987-88 by £16½ million.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cash Limits

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any changes have occurred in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office cash limits for 1985-86.

Mr. Eggar: The cash limit for Class 11 Vote 1 (Overseas Representation, Diplomatic, Consular and other Foreign and Commonwealth Services) will be increased by £751,000 to £384,277,000. This represents an increase of £1,751,000 in respect of the end of year flexibility scheme on the overseas estate, offset by a reduction of £1 million on the provision for capital expenditure for relay stations.

The cash limit for Class 11 Vote 3 (BBC External Services) will be correspondingly increased by £1 million to £90,018,000. The extra money on Vote 3 will be used to enable the BBC to maintain the planned level of progress on its audibility programme. The changes are subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 8 November 1985

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Lunch-time Supervision

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much he is proposing to spend on lunch-time supervision in schools during the current year; how this compares with sums spent for comparative purposes in each year since 1955; what he is proposing to spend in 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: Some nine out of 10 teachers are now refusing to supervise at midday, a duty which they deem to be voluntary, and very few schools are unaffected by the disruption. That disruption hits directly at parents and their children and is virtually cost-free to teachers. I have previously made clear to the House the Government's willingness to set aside extra money from within the envelope of £1,250 million conditionally available for a new pay structure to help the employers with the cost of supervising pupils at midday. The Government have now decided that resources should be made available to support expenditure of up to £10 million in this financial year and £40 million in 1986-87 on new arrangements for midday supervision in England and Wales. Our purpose in making this new money available is to put local education authorities in a position to secure and pay for effective supervision at midday. It will also remove a long-standing grievance of the teachers.

To that end my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I intend to lay before the House amending regulations which will enable us to use our powers under the Education (Grants and Awards) Act 1984 to pay education support grants (ESGs) in respect of approved expenditure by local education authorities on provision for the supervision of school pupils at midday. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales will be willing to consider sympathetically representations from authorities seeking disregards of such expenditure in 1985-86 approved for ESG for the purposes of calculating the abatement of block grant.

The 1984 Act provides that expenditure approved for ESG should not exceed 0·5 per cent. of total planned expenditure on education by local authorities. In 1985-86 expenditure already approved for ESG and planned support for midday supervision will not exceed that figure, but the addition of £40 million to the programmes already approved for 1986-87 would cause it to be exceeded next year. The Government therefore intend to introduce a Bill to raise the limit to 1 per cent. We also intend however, pending the outcome of the present review of local government finance, to keep expenditure approved for ESG in respect of activities other than midday supervision within 0·5 per cent. of the planned total.

We shall consult with representatives of the local education authorities as a matter of urgency on the details of the new arrangements. I hope that they will be willing to take action swiftly in the interests of pupils and their parents.

Figures for comparable expenditure in earlier years are not available.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the future funding arrangements for Harland and Wolff plc.

Mr. Tom King: Following a review of the company's business prospect the Government has decided to make £36·5 million, inclusive of intervention fund payments, available for the continued support of Harland and Wolff plc in the financial year 1985-86.

EMPLOYMENT

Family Leave

Mr. Chope asked the Paymaster General whether he will make available the results of the Department of Employment consultation exercise on the European Commission's draft directive on parental leave and leave for family reasons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The results of the consultation exercise have today been placed in the Library of the House. The exercise drew response from a wide range of organisations and individuals and we have noted the views expressed. We believe these matters are best pursued by voluntary negotiations between employers and employees and that legislation of this nature would be damaging to the prospects for jobs.

Pay Deductions

Mr. Hayward asked the Paymaster General what response he has had to the proposals concerning deductions from pay that were published in October 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The consultation exercise showed broad support for the central proposals that deductions from pay would be unlawful unless authorised by statute, by the contract of employment or by the written consent of the employee, and that there would be a right of complaint concerning unauthorised deductions to an industrial tribunal.

In the case of deductions relating to stock or cash deficiencies the preponderant view amongst those responding favoured a limitation to 10 per cent. of gross pay otherwise due to the employee.

Legislation along the lines of these proposals will be introduced shortly.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service Manpower

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if copies of the annual report by the Treasury on civil service manpower reductions in 1984-85 will be made available to hon. Members.

Mr. MacGregor: Yes. The 1984-85 annual report has been given to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and copies will be placed in the Library of the House.

WALES

Higher Education

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has concluded his review of the Wales advisory board for local authority higher education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have now completed the review. The responses which I received to the consultation paper about the future of WAB were overwhelmingly in favour of retaining a central body to plan local authority higher education in Wales. After considering the responses and after further discussions with the parties concerned I have concluded that the Wales advisory board should continue to operate on broadly the same lines as at present. I do not think that there is any need to change its remit or its three-tier structure of committee, board and working groups. I am satisfied that the committee should in the interests of accountability continue to consist of elected local authority members with a Welsh Office Minister as chairman.

Since there is only one voluntary college in Wales I have not been convinced that there is a role for the WAB analogous to that of the NAB in England of advising me on the distribution of resources within that sector. However I shall continue to look to the WAB for advice on the distribution of initial teacher training places and other teacher training matters in both the local authority and voluntary sectors. In view of the arrangements for local authority capital allocations which exist in Wales, which have been developed in close consultation with the local authorities, I do not believe it would be appropriate for the WAB to become involved in making judgments on capital expenditure in local authority higher education.

The WAB was set up as a joint local and central government body by the Welsh Office, the Welsh counties committee and the Welsh joint education committee. It is important that the WAB should be clearly seen as an independent and impartial source of advice on local authority higher education matters in the Principality. In order that it may fulfil that role I have been convinced that it should have the status of an independent organisation. I am therefore proposing, with the agreement of the WCC and the WJEC, to bring to an end the present arrangements whereby they and the Welsh Office all provide a secretary for the WAB with the executive secretary being provided by the WJEC. In future the WAB will be served by its own independent secretariat and will have only one secretary. However, I do not consider it necessary for the WAB to be given separate corporate status.

I am concerned that greater consideration should be given in the WAB to issues which straddle the "binary" line between the public and university sectors. Although a WAB/university liaison panel has been established progress which has so far been achieved in transbinary co-operation falls short of what I would wish to see. I am therefore proposing that in future a member of the UGC should attend the WAB board as an assessor which I believe will help to increase understanding between the sectors. I will want to keep the issue of university representation on the WAB under review to ensure that these arrangements work satisfactorily.

I am grateful to the WAB for the valuable advice it has given and I commend in particular the work it is doing to develop a sound basis for the planning of local authority higher education in Wales. There is much more to be done and there are challenging times ahead for higher education. It is important that the WAB is now seen to be established on a secure footing to tackle the problems and opportunities ahead.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Rolls-Royce (Privatisation)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to prepare for the privatisation of Rolls-Royce Limited.

Mr. Pattie: The Department announced on 11 July that Samuel Montagu and Co. Ltd. had been appointed to give preliminary advice to the Government on the privatisation of Rolls-Royce Ltd. I have now received its advice and confirm that, subject to market conditions, the Government intend to privatise Rolls-Royce before the end of the present Parliament.

Before privatisation it will be necessary for Rolls-Royce to be re-registered as a public limited company. Preparatory to re-registration, Rolls-Royce will apply to the court for confirmation of a reduction of capital under section 135 of the Companies Act 1985. A resolution to reduce the share capital was approved at an extra-ordinary general meeting of the company on 7 November.

The proposed reduction of share capital will take the form of a reduction in the nominal value from £1 to 25p of each of the 600,000,000 authorised shares, of which 508,000,000 are issued. This will reduce the nominal value of the issued share capital by £381 million, to £127 million. £372 million of the reduction will be utilised to eliminate the company's deficit on distributable reserves at 31 December 1984. The balance of £9 million will be credited to a non-distributable reserve.

At present, Rolls-Royce operates with the backing of assurances, first given by the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) on 22 February 1973 and confirmed by successive Governments, that the Government would ensure that the debts of the company would be met in the extremely unlikely event of a liquidation. The Government intend to ensure that on privatisation Rolls-Royce will have an appropriate capital structure for it to operate in the private sector without the need for such Governmnt assurances. I shall make a further announcement about this in due course.

ENERGY

Departmental Cash Limits

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give details of changes to his Department's cash limits.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The cash limit for class IV, vote 5 will be reduced by £700,000 from £289,674,000 to £288,974,000 to offset an increase on the non-cash limited class IV, vote 19, where additional provision is to be

taken, subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, to cover an increase in the fee payable to the British National Oil Corporation and its successor, the Oil and Pipelines Agency, for acting as the Government's agents in the disposal of petroleum taken as royalty in kind. There is therefore no net change in public expenditure arising from that increase.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class IV, vote 25 (sale of shares in the British Gas Corporation) will be increased by £850,000 from £650,000 to £1,500,000 because of increased preliminary work in connection with the sale. The increase will be charged to the reserve, and so will not increase public expenditure.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce

Mr. Couchman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any changes are proposed in the cash limit for the intervention board for agricultural produce.

Mr. Jopling: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class III, vote 2 will be increased by £1,468,000 from £21,031,000 to £22,499,000 to meet increased administrative costs incurred in supporting agriculture. The increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planning total of public expenditure.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 11 November 1985

ENVIRONMENT

Urban Development Grant

Mr. Nicholas Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the objectives and priorities of the urban development grant scheme.

Sir George Young: The primary aim of urban development grant is to promote the economic and physical regeneration of inner urban areas by levering private sector investment into such areas. Priority is being given to urban areas with serious social needs, and accordingly formal invitations to submit applications for urban development grant have been extended to the county and district councils for district councils for districts in England which have been designated under the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978 or which have enterprise zones.

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list the 121 industrial and commercial projects now approved for urban development grant, with the amounts, and with an estimate of the permanent jobs provided thereby.

Sir George Young: Lists of projects approved for urban development grant are regularly placed in the Library of the House. I am sending a copy of the latest version to my hon. Friend. For the reasons of commercial confidentiality, it is not the practice to disclose further details of individual projects.

Defective Council Housing

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department's report on defective council-owned housing and the amount of work to be undertaken will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: A report on the findings of the Department's recent inquiry into the condition of the local authority housing stock will be published very shortly.

Owner-Occupiers (Mortgages)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current average subsidy for an owner-occupier with a mortgage in Great Britain and Scotland, respectively, where subsidy is defined as in "Housing Policy, Technical Volume" part 1, cmnd. 6851; and what is the average subsidy for a council tenant in Great Britain and Scotland, respectively.

Sir George Young: I will write to the hon. Member.

Homelessness

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last discussed with the Housing Corporation homelessness in the London borough of Brent and the outcome of the submission he made for an increase in funds for the Brent People's Housing Association and the Paddington Churches' Housing Association.

Sir George Young: My Department is in regular touch with the Housing Corporation on a number of issues, including homelessness. The corporation has recently made available resources to develop a major site in Brent.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of homeless families living in bed and breakfast accommodation on 30 September from the London borough of Brent together with the current cost of this maintenance.

Sir George Young: The latest information made available to the Department is that 675 homeless households were living in bed and breakfast accommodation in June 1985. From other council papers, I understand the annual net cost to the council of placing a family in this type of accommodation is approximately £2,000.

Housing Capital Allocation (Brent)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how the 1985-86 housing capital allocation for the London borough of Brent compares in real terms with the 1979-80 allocation; and what is the percentage decrease.

Sir George Young: Brent's final HIP allocation for 1979-80 was £31·376m. Its current allocation for 1985-86 is £23.026m, which would represent a decrease of 54 per cent. in real terms. However, since 1981-82, authorities have been able to augment their spending power using the prescribed proportion of available capital receipts. The prescribed proportion of housing capital receipts generated by Brent in 1984-85 was £13·483.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when next he will review the housing capital allocation for the London borough of Brent; what is his estimate of the number of building starts that this will create for the year 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend will announce the 1986-87 housing investment programme allocation for the London borough of Brent in due course. Full account will be taken of general housing needs, including homelessness. Within its allocation, the authority will be free to determine its own priorities.

Planning Appeal No. APP/A5270/A85/31065

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he can give an indication as to the likely date that the decision in respect of planning appeal No. APP/A5270/A85/31065, heard on Wednesday 16 October, will be announced.

Mr. Tracey: I understand that the decision letter will be issued very shortly.

Established Use Certificates

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the system for

establishing the lawful use of land in the light of his Department's memorandum on the abolition of established use certificates.

Mr. Tracey: We do not intend to pursue the proposal to withdraw the right to apply for an established use certificate under section 94 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. Further proposals, which we are assessing, on establishing the lawful use of land have recently been made by The Law Society and The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

Amey Roadstone

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to Amey Roadstone and its subsidiaries in excess of £100,000 over the last two financial years.

Sir George Young: The contracts awarded by the Property Services Agency of the Department of the Environment to Amey Roadstone during the two years ending 31 March 1985 were:

Site	*Service*	*Tender Price £*
Gibraltar	Runway hardstanding work	1,275,000
RAF Lyneham	Runway hardstanding work	176,000
RAF Wattisham	Runway hardstanding work	1,994,643
RAF Boulmer	Runway hardstanding work	2,874,225
Gibraltar	Runway hardstanding work	1,676,000
RAF Leuchars	Runway hardstanding work	2,425,555
Falkland Islands	Runway hardstanding work	2,735,000
RAE Farnborough	Runway hardstanding work	450,000
RAF Upper Heyford	Runway hardstanding work	3,191,500
RNAS Culdrose	Runway hardstanding work	382,892
HMNB Devonport	Roads	582,750
Strathclyde	Roads	2,173,355
Falkland Islands (joint venture)	Runway hardstanding work	17,500,000
RAF Alconbury	Runway hardstanding work	212,543
RN Culdrose	Runway hardstanding work	867,125
Falkland Islands (joint venture)	Runway hardstanding work	14,199,506
RAF Upper Heyford	Runway hardstanding work	977,455
RAF Greenham Common	Runway hardstanding work	3,978,098
RAF Wyton	Runway hardstanding work	2,667,112

No contracts were awarded to any Amey Roadstone subsidiaries.

Empty Properties

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses and flats have been empty for over six months, nationally and by region; and how this compares with five and 10 years ago.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available.

Acid Rain

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what reports he has received concerning tree damage allegedly attributed to acid rain.

Mrs. Rumbold: Copies of the following reports prepared in the past year are available to the Department of the Environment:

A report by the Forestry Commission entitled "Forest Health and Air Pollution, 1984, Survey" (Forestry Commission Research and Development Paper 142) which concluded "the 1984 survey of Sitka and Norway spruce and Scots pine in Great Britain has shown no evidence of any new form of forest damage. Stands in less than perfect health can be accounted for without invoking pollution damage. Nevertheless, only repeated surveys will show whether Britain has indeed escaped the blight which has descended on the forests of central Europe".

A report entitled "Beech Health Study" by D. Lonsdale and J. N. Gibbs for the Forestry Commission (Research Information Note 100/85/PATH) which concluded, amongst other things, that no prima facie evidence for pollution damage has as yet been found but further conclusions must await a complete analysis of the data.

A recent report of a survey by the Friends of the Earth on acid rain damage to trees in Britain which concluded, among other things, that typical symptoms of acid rain damage to trees are now widespresd in Britain.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environent if he will list those research projects receiving Government support for the investigation of acid deposition on *(a)* wildlife, *(b)* agricultural ecosystems and *(c)* buildings and structures and state the sums involved.

Mrs. Rumbold: The following is a list of research projects in my Department's current research programme relating to the effects of acid deposition on the natural environment and buildings:

Research project	*Total cost £*
1. The effects of acid rain on upland soils and streams	244,200
2. Chemical inputs from precipitation and their effect on a catchment	129,000
3. Effects on acidification on lakes and streams in Scotland	147,000
4. Effects of acid rain on plants and soils	569,000
5. Effects of afforestation and land management on the acidity of 5 catchments in Wales	272,000
6. Effects of acid rain on freshwater eco-systems in north-west England	176,000
7. Effects of acid deposition and photo-oxidants on trees	184,000
8. Aspects of pollutant attack on limestone buildings	49,000
9. Degradation of building materials in the presence of air pollutants	70,500
10. Identification and assessment of materials damage by air pollution	25,500
11. Effects of atmospheric nitrogen compounds on natural vegetation	87,200
12. Effects of low temperature fluctuation on the sensitivity of crops and trees to air pollutant damage	67,000
13. Effects of air pollution on metallic materials	150,000
14. Pollutant take-up and stone decaying southern Britain	27,000
15. Effects of acid deposition on vertical surfaces	19,500
16. Development of methodologies to evaluate stock at risk from air pollution	10,700
Total	2,227,600

I understand that the following relevant research projects are also receiving Government support:

Project	*Total Cost £*
Scottish Office: acid deposition at Loch Dee	75,000
Welsh Office: ecological monitoring of acid rain in Wales	32,000
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food: the response of barley to sulphur dioxide at concentrations controlled by fumigation	65,200
Forestry Commission: effects of ambient levels of air pollution on tree growth in rural areas	*

* This work is being undertaken directly by the Forestry Commission. The capital cost of equipment is £190,000 and about 2½ man years effort a year will be required.

Natural Environment Research Council

Project	*Cost in 1984-85* £
1. Acidification of run-off from melting snow pack	16,500
2. Effects of ambient air pollutants on plant growth in and around London	24,300
3. Assessment of likely concentrations of toxic products of SO_2 and NO_x fumigation of plants at their site of action	4,400
4. Effects of gaseous pollutants on the interaction between plants and invertebrate herbivores	3,600
5. Physiological effects of SO_2 pollution in water stressed plants	6,000
6. Physiological Biochemical and ultra-structural role of calcium in the gills of freshwater teleosts and arthropods with respect to survival at low pH	16,000
7. Interception of wind blown fog by vegetation and pathways for pollutant deposition	13,700
8. Chemical speciation of Aluminium	27,700 (50 per cent from DOE)
9. Diatom survey related to pH and water chemistry	12,000 (50 per cent from DOE)
10. Measurement of pH in freshwaters	19,000
11. Trophic relationships and effects of acid waters on stream invertebrates	15,000
12. Acid deposition and ground water	9,000 (50 per cent from EEC)
13. Effects of different forest canopies on the gross precipitation passing to the soil	29,000 (50 per cent from DOE)
14. Effects of acid precipitation on river catchments	23,700 (50 per cent from DOE)
15. Effects of polluted atmospheres on crops	102,000 (40 per cent from MAFF)
16. Interaction of airborne pollutants with natural surfaces in particular epicuticular wax of scots pine	5,000
17. Interaction of grazing and air pollution	26,500
18. Measurement of the rate of dry deposition of SO_2 on a Scots pine forest	13,600
19. Chemical composition of rainfall through Northern Britain	33,900
20. Effect of acid rain on the extension growth of Sitka spruce	3,800
21. Influence of rainfall acidity on transport and exchange of gases between plants and atmosphere	3,200
22. Hydro-chemistry of run-off from upland catchments	26,500
23. Transient acid surges in upland streams	54,000
Total	488,400

Haringey (Direct Labour Organisation)

Sir Hugh Rossi asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take in the light of the report on the direct labour organisation of the London borough of Haringey submitted to him under section 17(4) of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is now considering the special report received from the London borough of Haringey on 30 October and will notify the borough of his decision in due course.

Rehousing Agreements (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to give his consent to the rehousing agreements within the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Islington and Southwark, for which the Greater London council applied on 10 October.

Sir George Young: In view of the liabilities for successor authorities that may be created by these rehousing agreements, the Department has asked the GLC for further information including the views of the boroughs concerned. When this information is received, the application will be given expeditious consideration.

Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many members of his Department *(a)* have been transferred to the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission and *(b)* will be transferred to the commission.

Mr. Tracey: *(a)* As at 31 October 1985, 83 former staff of the Department of the Environment had become permanent employees of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission; *(b)* 772 of the Department's staff on secondment to the commission asked for their names to be included in the statutory list of those to whom the commission was bound to make job offers by 31 October. As those job offers remain open for three months the total numbers choosing to take up permanent employment with the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission may not be known until the end of January 1986.

Waste Regulation and Disposal

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the proposals he has received from authorities for joint arrangements for waste regulation and disposal.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield (Mr. King) on 25 October 1985 at columns *266-67*.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those authorities that have submitted draft binding agreements on future arrangements for waste regulation and disposal.

Mrs. Rumbold: Draft agreements on the future arrangements for waste disposal have been submitted by or on behalf of the following local authorities:

London boroughs of Bromley, Croydon, Kingston upon Thames, Merton and Sutton;
Cities of London and Westminster and the London borough of Tower Hamlets;
City of Sheffield and metropolitan boroughs of Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham;
City of Newcastle and metropolitan boroughs of Gateshead, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland;
City of Birmingham and metropolitan boroughs of Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton;
Cities of Bradford, Leeds and Wakefield and metropolitan boroughs of Calderdale and Kirklees; and
London boroughs of Southwark, Greenwich and Lewisham.

Draft Property Transfer Orders

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to extend the deadline for London borough input into draft property transfer orders under the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Tracey: No. My right hon. Friend will, however, take account of any further comments he receives in so far as this is practicable.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the London boroughs which provided input by the due date into draft property transfer orders under the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Tracey: The following London boroughs have commented to the Department of the Environment in response to the guidance note for London borough councils, issued on 16 July 1985 and/or to the second property memorandum, issued on 3 September 1985:

Barking and Dagenham
Barnet
Bexley
Bromley
City of London
Croydon
Ealing
Enfield
Hackney
Hammersmith and Fulham
Harrow
Havering
Hillingdon
Hounslow
Islington
Kensington and Chelsea
Newham
Redbridge
Richmond
Wandsworth
Waltham Forest
Westminster

Some of these were received after the deadlines set in the documents.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he intends to announce his decision on arrangements for early retirement arising from the Local Government Act 1985 for staff of the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils;

(2) when he intends to announce his decision on the arrangements for compensation for financial detriment arising from the Local Government Act 1985 for staff of the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Tracey: Shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of responses received in support of the proposals in his Department's consultation paper arising from the Local Government Act 1985 regarding early retirement arrangements for staff of the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Tracey: Many responses were received. All were in favour of the principle of the scheme.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the responses received to his Deprtment's proposals for future arrangements for the Greater London council's seaside and country homes.

Sir George Young: Replies have been received from 38 of the 44 non-metropolitan districts invited to respond, 6 London boroughs, the GLC and 3 local authority associations.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if, in the light of discussions with successor authorities since the enactment of the Local Government Act 1985, he is able to revise his estimate of the number of posts in local government service that will be lost as a result of the abolition of the Greater London council;

(2) if, in the light of discussions with successor authorities since the enactment of the Local Government Act 1985, he is able to revise his estimate of the number of posts that will be created in the public sector as a result of the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Tracey: I have nothing to add to the estimate given in the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Local Government Act 1985 that local authority manpower will be reduced by some 8,000 posts, but that there will be an estimated increase in other public sector bodies of about 900 posts.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he proposes to give successor authorities concerning redundancies arising from the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to add to the advice already sent out in "Abolition of the GLC and MCCs: arrangements for staffing the new structure"—November 1984; and "Treatment of GLC/MCC Employees" — LGA(L) (DOE)9; LGA(MC) (DOE)10. I have placed copies of both in the Library.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of circular No. 9 issued by the London and Metropolitan Government Staff Commission on 11 October, his Department will be advising successor authorities to consider the possibilities of designation for staff of the Greater London council currently working in functions to be transferred after the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Tracey: My Department has already issued a consultation paper inviting such proposals. I am placing a copy in the Library.

Atmospheric Pollution

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give a timetable for publication of the results of studies being made by *(a)* the acid waters review group, *(b)* the acid soils review group and *(c)* studies on ozone made at the energy technology support unit at Harwell.

Mrs. Rumbold: I expect to receive a report from the Acid Waters Review Group early in 1986. There is no acid soils review group but the Atmospheric Effects Review Group is considering the effects of acidity on terrestrial systems; I expect this group to report in the latter half of 1986. The Department of the Environment is now funding

detailed modelling studies on the generation and occurrence of atmospheric ozone and has set up a Photochemical Oxidants Review Group; I expect this group to report in about 18 months.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he expects to receive the list of sites suitable for the disposal of intermediate and low level radioactive waste proposed by the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive;

(2) if he will describe the review that he intends to make of the implementation of Government policy on the selection of sites for the disposal of intermediate and low-level radioactive waste;

(3) who will be carrying out the review of the implementation of Government policy on the selection of sites for the disposal of intermediate and low-level radioactive waste;

(4) what account will be taken of the review of the implementation of Government policy on the selection of sites for the disposal of intermediate and low-level radioactive waste when he receives the proposed list of suitable sites from the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive;

(5) how long the review of the implementation of Government policy on the selection of sites for the disposal of intermediate and low-level radioactive waste is to take.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is hoped that NIREX will be in a position to make an announcement of possible sites before the end of the year. The review which is being carried out in the interim is essentially a taking stock of progress so far made and the time-table for the future. It is being carried out by officials reporting to Ministers in the normal way. All relevant information will be made available and taken into account before decisions are eventually taken.

Canary Wharf Site, Isle of Dogs

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in relation to the proposals for the Canary wharf site in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone, the Royal Fine Arts Commission has been consulted.

Sir George Young: The Royal Fine Arts Commission will receive a full presentation of the scheme on 13 November 1985.

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what account was taken in the decision regarding the proposed development of the Canary wharf site in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone of the scale, extent and height of the proposed development.

Sir George Young: The London Docklands Development Corporation took full account of the scale, extent and height of the development before approving it in principle at its board meeting on 17 October 1985.

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what schemes, actual or proposed, were submitted for his Department's approval and subsequently withdrawn prior to the proposal currently under discussion for the development of the Canary wharf site in the Isle of Dogs.

Sir George Young: None.

European Regional Development Fund

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the criteria used by his Department in selecting projects for submission to the EEC Commission for funding under the European regional development fund.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My Department has issued detailed guidance to all local and public authorities on the eligibility of projects for European regional development fund assistance. This is based on the criteria set out in Council Regulation (EEC) 1787/84 and the operating practices of the European Commission. Further copies of the guidance are available from the Department's regional offices and those Departments sponsoring public authorities. It is ultimately for the European Commission to decide which projects to assist.

Further Education (Report)

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will name the 165 polytechnics and colleges of further education which were studied by the Audit Commission in producing the report "Obtaining Better Value from Further Education", June 1985.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The information is not held in my Department and my right hon. Friend is precluded by statute from requiring the Audit Commission to disclose it. If he requires further particulars, the right hon. Member may wish to write to the commission at 1 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PN.

Local Authority Manpower

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of the quarterly joint local authority manpower watch for England from the first count to the latest.

Mrs. Rumbold: Copies of the results of the joint manpower watch survey have been sent to the House of Commons Library each quarter since its inception in 1975. Results for quarters before September 1981 cover England and Wales.

Commissioner for Local Administration

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received over the past six years about the need to strengthen the powers of the Commissioner for Local Administration; what responses he has given; and whether he plans to bring forward firm proposals.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Commission for Local Administration in England has submitted proposals for the extension of its powers twice over the last six years. The Secretary of State's responses were issued on 7 March 1984 and 27 September 1985 respectively. The Government's proposals are contained in those documents, copies of which have been deposited in the Library.

Grants (Cumbria)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish a list of all urban development grant projects and the value of grants

paid for each project to each authority within the county of Cumbria for each year since the inception of the scheme.

Sir George Young: Lists of projects approved for urban development grant are regularly placed in the Library of the House, and I am sending a copy of the latest version to the hon. Member. No grant has yet been paid for any projects in Cumbria.

Development Commission

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of his Department's grant in aid to the Development Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Development Commission's grant in aid for 1985-86 is £24·901 million. Subject to Parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate I propose to increase by £3·15 million the Development Commission's grant-in-aid for provision of factory premises and to meet the liability to pay corporation tax. For this purpose the cash limit for class VIII, Vote 2 has been increased by £3·15 million from £144,575,000 to £147,725,000. The increase is more than offset by a reduction of £5·119 million in the cash limit for class VIII, Vote 5 from £148,532,000 to £143,413,000 arising from savings I have made in research and administration costs and will, therefore, not add to the planning total of public expenditure.

London (Trust)

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to announce the arrangements for administering the proposed new trust for London; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The trustees of the City Parochial Foundation (CPF) have accepted the Secretary of State's invitation to administer the new trust. The trustees envisage administering the trust quite separately from the CPF. It is hoped to have the new trust legally established not later than 31 March 1986.

It will be for the trustees to determine the policies and procedures of the new trust. In doing so, they will doubtless have regard to the present pattern of financial support for voluntary organisations in London and will consider the view of voluntary organisations, other charitable trusts and local authorities. These matters will be considered by the trustees in the course of 1986.

Public Accounts Committee (Treasury Minute)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to issue the circular referred to in the Treasury minute published on 24 October 1984 in response to the twenty-third report of the Public Accounts Committee of Session 1983-84.

Mr. John Patten: A circular (DOE 26/85; Welsh Office 54/85) which offers advice on the interpretation of some aspects of the existing home improvement grant legislation is being sent to all local authorities today and copies have been placed in the Library.

The circular makes it clear that, with effect from 2 December 1985, the Government will, in general, no longer pay Exchequer contributions towards grants to developers who intend to improve houses and sell them at a profit.

The other main purposes of the circular are as follows:

1. To set out the Secretary of State's general position as regards the payment of Exchequer contribution.
2. To state the views of the Department and the Welsh Office on the interpretation of some provisions of the home improvement grant legislation.
3. To inform local authorities of those circumstances in which Exchequer contribution will no longer normally be payable, with effect from 2 December 1985.
4. To offer guidance on certain other aspects of the legislation which have given rise to a number of inquiries.

Building Control

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has approved any inspectors for the purpose of operating the system of private certification for building control

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend has today approved the National House-Building Council's subsidiary company, NHBC Building Control Services Ltd., as an inspector to supervise the erection of dwellings of up to four storeys (or three storeys and a basement). He has also approved the National House-Building Council's insurance scheme which will apply to all dwellings which it inspects in this capacity.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Northern Ireland (Trial Delays)

64. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Attorney-General what reduction has been made in the present year in the time elapsing before persons charged with offences in Northern Ireland are brought to trial.

The Solicitor-General: In the first six months of 1985 the average delay between committal and arraignment was 11 weeks, which is the same as the average for the calendar year 1984. Statistics showing the average time between first remand and committal are not yet available for the current year.

Legal Aid

65. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Attorney-General what has been the increase in the last year in the time taken by the Law Society to issue civil aid certificates.

The Solicitor-General: The Law Society estimates that in the financial year 1984-85—which is the latest period for which information is available—it took an average of 56 days to issue a civil legal aid certificate. This compares with 55 days in 1983-84. These are actual days. The comparable figures for working days are 39 for 1984-85 and 38 for 1983-84, an increase of one working day.

Mr. John Morris asked the Attorney-General what representations have been received from solicitors practising under legal aid certificates regarding delays in the payment of fees; what is the problem of staffing as regards certifying payments; and whether he is satisfied that all payments are currently made as expeditiously as possible.

The Solicitor-General: The payment of bills arising under legal aid certificates is a function of the Law

Society. It is for it to allocate staff to this and the other functions that it carries out in respect of legal aid administration within the provision allocated by the Government. In the context of the sums available for the overall total of public expenditure provision has been allowed to enable the Law Society to employ up to 1,300 staff in this financial year compared with 1,275 and 1,250 in the past two years. During 1985, the Lord Chancellor has received a small number of letters from solicitors about delays in the payment of bills. Such delays are never satisfactory but the Lord Chancellor is confident that the Law Society does everything it can to keep them to a minimum.

Official Secrets Act

66. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Attorney-General what considerations he has in mind in considering whether or not to authorise a prosecution under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

The Solicitor-General: My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General considers all cases which require his consent in the light of the guidelines on the criteria for prosecution which he published in February 1983 and placed in the Library of the House. Cases under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 are treated no differently from any other.

Jury Trials

67. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Attorney-General if he will give figures for the percentage of cases tried by a jury which resulted in a conviction in the last year for which figures are available and the equivalent figure for 1975.

The Solicitor-General: The percentage of defendants who pleaded not guilty to some or all counts on indictment in the Crown court, but who were nevertheless convicted on one or more of those counts was 51 per cent., in 1984 and 55 per cent., in 1975.

Duty Solicitor Scheme

68. **Mr. John Morris** asked the Attorney-General what progress has been made in setting up the 24-hour duty solicitor scheme; and if it will be fully operational when the Police and Criminal Evidence Act comes into operation.

The Solicitor-General: My right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor intends the 24-hour duty solicitor scheme to come into effect on 1 January 1986, at the same time as the relevant provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The Law Society has been invited to ensure that the arrangements are uniformly effective as soon as possible.

Falklands War (Cabinet Deliberations)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General when the Director of Public Prosecutions expects to complete his investigations into alleged leaks to unauthorised persons of information relating to the deliberations of the War Cabinet during the Falklands conflict.

The Solicitor-General: I understand from the director that the police investigation requested by him is proceeding as expediously as practicable. He shares my view that it is in the public interest that it should be completed as soon as possible and has so informed the police.

Celaton Laboratory Research and Jacobson Chemicals Ltd.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Attorney-General if he will institute proceedings against Celaton Laboratory Research and Jacobson Chemicals Ltd. for offences in relation to the Cosmetic Products Regulations 1984, in the light of the material supplied to the Department of Health and Social Security by the hon. Member for Belfast, South.

The Solicitor-General: I have taken the question as referring to the Consumer Products (Safety) Regulations 1984. Primary responsibility for the enforcement of this legislation rests with the Department of Trade and Industry.

I understand that the Department of Health and Social Security is considering the material referred to by the hon. Member which was sent to the Department on 1 November 1985.

I have asked to be informed of the outcome of that consideration and will write to the hon. Member in due course.

Mr. Costas Elenas

Mr. McNamara asked the Attorney-General why Mr. Costas Elenas was not granted immunity against prosecution in Britain in return for giving evidence in the trial of the Cyprus service men; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: During the course of the trial, the solicitors for one of the defendants requested the Director of Public Prosecutions that Mr. Costas Elenas should be given immunity from prosecution whilst in the jurisdiction of the English courts arising out of his alleged involvement in the case in order that he might give evidence as a witness at the trial.

The Director of Public Prosecutions, while pointing out that he was unable on the information available to him to express an opinion as to the jurisdiction of our courts for offences under the Official Secrets Acts in respect of Mr. Elenas, replied that it was not his usual practice to grant immunity from prosecution to persons suspected of having committed criminal offences and he could see no reason that would justify his making an exception in respect of Mr. Elenas for any alleged involvement in the matters being tried. He added, however, that he was not presently aware of any admissible evidence tending to show that Mr. Elenas had committed any criminal offence.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Jury System

84. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have received about the functioning of the jury system.

Mr. Mellor: From time to time my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary receive representations about general matters

such as eligibility for jury service, the right to excusal, the expenses payable, and the principle of random selection. In addition we have received one letter from an hon. Member about the defence right of peremptory challenge, and we and colleagues are aware of recent concern expressed about this. As my right hon. Friend announced on 7 November at column *130*, we shall arrange for the Crown Prosecution Service to gather further information about the use of peremptory challenge.

Boards of Visitors (Applicants)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why an applicant for an appointment to a board of visitors, on the form which he or she must complete, is required to state the height of his or her spouse.

Mr. Mellor: Enquiries are made of criminal records about all nominations for appointments as members of boards of visitors and their spouses. The essential information on which these enquiries are made includes details of height.

Police (Uniforms)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it is his policy that the wearing of diced cap bands must be restricted to the police force only.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Under section 52 of the Police Act 1964 there are circumstances in which it is an offence for a person to impersonate a police officer or to wear, or possess, any article of police uniform. Police representative bodies have expressed the view that the wearing of diced cap bands by other uniformed organisations can confuse members of the public and their view is being drawn to the attention of other emergency services.

Section 11 Grants

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much is spent on section 11 grants per annum in England and Wales.

Mr. Waddington: Total grant paid to local authorities in respect of the financial year 1983-84, the latest year for which figures are available, is £73,108,128. Certain payments are provisional subject to audit and final acceptance by the Home Office, and final figures may therefore be slightly different.

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many workers are currently employed on section 11 grants for the Chinese community; on what schemes; and where these schemes are located.

Mr. Waddington: On the information readily available, we are aware of nineteen such posts. These are:

	Scheme
Camden	1 Community services librarian 1 Social worker 2 Social worker assistants 1 Housing adviser
Barking and Dagenham	1 Cantonese bilingual ESL teacher—infant 1 Bilingual clerical assistant at language unit—Cantonese
Merseyside Liverpool	2 Chinese community workers 3 Social workers (Chinese unit) 1 Housing area liaison officer (Chinese community) 1 Senior assistant librarian
Manchester	1 Librarian 1 Library assistant 1 Community information officer
Westminster	1 Librarian (Chinese community) 1 Specialist social worker.

Police (Liverpool)

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what meetings representatives of his Department have had with the chief constable of Merseyside since 1981; whether policing methods in Liverpool were discussed at any of these meetings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Home Office officials and members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary have met the Chief Constable of Merseyside on numerous occasions since 1981 to discuss issues of policing policy. The policing problems of Merseyside have been discussed but operations in any part of a police area are a matter for the Chief Constable.

Drunk-driving Offences (Wales)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were convicted in Wales of charges relating to drinking alcohol and driving in each year from 1978-79 to 1979-80.

Mr. Mellor: The available information relates to findings of guilt in the calendar year for offences of driving, etc. after consuming alcohol or drugs and is published annually for each police force area in 'Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables' (table 18 of the issue for 1983 and in corresponding tables of earlier volumes; the issue for 1984 will be published shortly). In 1978 and 1979 there were respectively 4,300 and 5,300 such findings of guilt in Wales.

Dwarf Throwing Competitions (Government Policy)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information his Department has about dwarf throwing competitions; if his Department has sought legal advice from outside the Government regarding the extent to which injuries inflicted in the course of such competitions may amount to assault; what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards such competitions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Our information is derived mainly from representations which the right hon. Member has himself conveyed to us. Our understanding of the legal position is set out in my right hon. Friend's letter of 22 October to the right hon. Member, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. The Government have no power to ban such competitions. I do not consider any useful purpose would be served by our seeking legal advice outside the Government: it would be for the courts to decide whether or not, in the circumstances of any case which came before them, an offence had been committed.

Cinematograph (Safety) Regulations

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations his Department has received from the Spinal Injuries Association about the effects for disabled people of the proposed Cinematographic (Safety) Regulations 1985; what reply he is sending; what other representations have been received on this matter; how many responses were favourable to what his Department is proposing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Spinal Injuries Association has sent comments on the draft Cinemas (Safety) Regulations and proposed new guidance. These comments will be considered in the consultative process together with comments which have been received from other organisations for disabled people and from organisations representing cinema exhibitors, cinema trades associations, licensing authorities, technical specialists and consumer organisations and from individuals. In general the draft Regulations and the proposed new guidance have been favourably received, although organisations for disabled people have criticised some of the detailed proposals in the guidance.

Immigration (Entry Refusals)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what action he expects right hon. or hon. Members to take prior to their making representations to him regarding a person who has been refused entry as a visitor at a United Kingdom port and whose sponsor lives in the constituency of the right hon. or hon. Member concerned; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what action he expects right hon. or hon. Members to take prior to making representations regarding a person who has been refused entry as a visitor at a United Kingdom port and whose sponsor's own right hon. or hon. Member has refused to consider taking up such representations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The points the hon. Member has raised will be addressed in the discussions which my right hon. Friend proposed in his statement to the House on 29 October. These will be put in hand in due course.

Operation Julie (Sentences)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the length of jail sentence imposed on each of the following persons convicted in 1978 of drugs offences following Operation Julie, the length of sentence actually served, and the date of their release, namely: Richard Kemp, Henry Todd, Brian Cuthbertson, Dr. Christine Bett, David Soloman, Andrew Monro and Russell Spencley.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the following table in order of sentence length. Persons released on licence on parole are compulsorily supervised by the probation service and are liable to recall to prison until the expiry of their sentence, excluding remission (which reduces time served by up to one third of the sentence).

The decision to release these persons on parole was taken in each case before the announcement in November 1983 by the then Home Secretary of a new, more restricted policy on parole. We are continuing to follow that policy. It means that prisoners serving sentences of over five years for offences of drug trafficking would not now be released early on parole other than in genuinely exceptional circumstances. It should also be noted that the maximum penalty for trafficking in class [illegible] drugs is now life imprisonment, not 14 years as at the time when these persons were sentenced.

Length of sentence	*Date of Release*	*Date of Expiry of Licence*	*Time spent in custody under sentence**
9 years	26 August 1982	29 March 1983	4 years 5 months 19 days
10 years	29 July 1982	27 November 1983	4 years 4 months 22 days
10 years	5 August 1982	29 November 1983	4 years 4 months 29 days
10 years	1 February 1983	15 May 1984	4 years 10 months 25 days
11 years	5 November 1982	10 August 1984	4 years 7 months 29 days
13 years	30 August 1983	26 November 1985	5 years 5 months 23 days
13 years	13 January 1984	11 December 1985	5 years 10 months 6 days

* Does not include time served in custody on remand.

Deportations (Hon. Member's Interventions)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of times the hon. Member for Brent, South has intervened on behalf of a sponsor from his constituency to prevent the deportation of a person arriving in the United Kingdom until the case has been considered by the Minister during 12 months ended 31 October and the number of such interventions where the written submission has not followed immediately.

Mr. Waddington: The precise information requested is not readily available, but since December 1984 the hon. Member has written on immigration cases on about 100 occasions. Our records indicate that in cases of passengers held up at the ports there have been three occasions on which his intervention was not followed immediately by a written submission.

Commission for Racial Equality

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of numbers of staff employed by the Commission for Racial Equality in each of its offices; and how many of these are Welsh speaking.

Mr. Waddington: The number of staff currently employed by the Commission for Racial Equality in each of its offices is:

	Number
London	162
Manchester	14
Leeds	9
Birmingham	13
Leicester	6

I understand that the commission has one fluent Welsh language speaker in its London office.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the dates on which Ministers from his Department have, since May 1979, met the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, indicating what was the general subject of discussion at each such meeting.

Mr. Waddington: Since May 1979 Home Office Ministers have met the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality on a number of occasions to discuss general matters of mutual interest affecting the commission; the most recent meeting was on 2 October when my right hon. Friend met the chairman and other members of the commission.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of maintaining the Commission for Racial Equality in each of the last five years.

Mr. Waddington: In the last five years, the Commission for Racial Equality has received grant-in-aid as follows:

Year	£ million
1980-81	7.036
1981-82	7.856
1982-83	8.392
1983-84	8.720
1984-85	9.261

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* details as to how many complaints the Commission for Racial Equality received from *(a)* England, *(b)* Northern Ireland, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Wales, respectively, for the last year for which this information is available.

Mr. Waddington: I understand that in 1984 the commission received 1,202 complaints: 1,172 from England, 12 from Scotland and 18 from Wales. The Race Relations Act 1976 does not extend to Northern Ireland.

Night-Clubs (Certificate Fees)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to allow licensing authorities to charge fees for the granting of certificates of suitability for night clubs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have no plans to do so, but if such legislation were introduced we should be happy to support it.

Mrs. Shreela Flather

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate by reference to the curriculum vitae of Mrs. Shreela Flather the criteria upon which the decision was taken to give her special responsibility for the affairs of the Commission for Racial Equality in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The allocation of particular responsibilities between commissioners is entirely a matter for the commission.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Budget

74. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether it is the policy of Her Majesty's Government to increase official aid with a view to achieving the United Nations target figure.

Mr. Raison: While the Government accept the United Nations 0·7 per cent. aid target in principle, like previous Administrations they are not committed to a timetable for achieving it.

Famine (EC Contingency Reserve)

76. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why he is opposed to the European Economic Community plan for a contingency reserve of food to be established in cases of further famine in Africa.

Mr. Raison: We support the creation of a contingency reserve by the European Community for emergency food aid in case of further famine in Africa. We believe it should be within the Community's normal food aid programme.

Developing Countries

77. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of United Kingdom voluntary aid to developing countries.

Mr. Raison: I understand that grants by British voluntary agencies to developing countries amounted to approximately £105 million in 1984. This includes emergency relief and long-term assistance but excludes administrative costs. Figures for 1985 are not yet available.

Sudan

78. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met His Excellency, the ambassador of the Sudan; and if he will make a statement on the subjects discussed.

Mr. Raison: I last met the Sudanese ambassador on 24 October on the occasion of the visit to this country of the Prime Minister of Sudan. We had a wide-ranging review of Sudan's present economic problems, and discussed the consequences of last season's drought in Sudan and the emergency relief operation to which we had contributed.

Developing Countries (Agriculture Aid)

79. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to increase official aid to agricultural development in poor countries.

Mr. Raison: Agricultural development is at the heart of our bilateral aid policy. It covers a wide spectrum from

plant genetics to feeder roads. In devising our programmes we have to take account of the wishes of aid recipient countries, but we aim to increase the agricultural content of these programmes where we can. Three new projects now under consideration are a second phase of the Indo-British fertiliser education project, two dry land agricultural projects in the Sudan, and a similar project in Kenya.

Developing Countries (Agriculture Aid)

80. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to spend more of the aid budget on training people from developing countries in agriculture and development technology in Britain.

Mr. Raison: I fully agree on the importance of training. We would be happy to consider requests from recipient Governments for a higher proportion of our aid to be spent for this purpose.

Sub-Saharan Africa

81. **Mr. Bowen Wells** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he will make a statement on the European Communities efforts to help starving communities in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Raison: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given earlier to my hon. Friend, the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor).

Aid Programme

82. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he makes of the benefits to British industry accruing from the aid programme.

Mr. Raison: The benefits to British industry are substantial. Bilateral aid, except finance for certain local costs, is tied to procurement in Britain and brings substantial orders to United Kingdom firms. In addition, aid funds used as part of the aid and trade provision help with further very substantial contracts for Britain. In 1984, 74 per cent. of the bilateral aid was tied. Procurement of British goods and services under multilateral aid programmes exceed our contributions to the agencies concerned.

Famine (Aid)

83. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further assistance he can make available to refugees who are victims of the African famine.

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further assistance he can make available to refugees who are victims of the African famine.

Mr. Raison: I have decided to make available a further £1·225 million. Of this £0·2 million is being allocated to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; £0·525 million to the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; and £0·5 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

These sums are additional to the £750,000 I approved last month, of which £500,000 was for the International Committee of the Red Cross and £250,000 for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Developing Countries (Debt)

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government in respect of the debt problems of developing countries.

Mr. Raison: Our policy is to consider the particular circumstances of each indebted country, so that necessary programmes for adjustment can be geared to individual needs, supported as required by co-ordinated financial arrangements.

Central America (Aid)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present level of British aid to *(a)* Nicaragua, *(b)* El Salvador, *(c)* Honduras and *(d)* Guatemala.

Mr. Raison: British bilateral aid in 1984-85, the latest period for which figures are available, amounted to about £36,000 to Nicaragua, £3,000 to El Salvador and £700,000 to Honduras. No bilateral aid was given to Guatemala. In 1984 Commonwealth Development Corporation loans of £2·6 million were made to Honduras; and El Salvador received £200,000 for resettlement of displaced persons.

The Gambia

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he has been able to provide to the Gambia to help deal with its current economic difficulties.

Mr. Raison: We have offered The Gambia Government £2·5 million immediate programme aid to help meet their balance of payments needs, subject to their continuing to implement the economic reforms they have agreed with the IMF and World Bank. This is in addition to £3·75 million of capital aid and technical cooperation in our bilateral programme this year. We are prepared to consider further aid from April 1986 if necessary.

These offers were made at a meeting of donors to consider the needs of The Gambia which were held in London in September, which was chaired by the World Bank and for which we made the necessary arrangements as host.

Share-Scholarship Scheme

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the response to the Overseas Development Administration's share-scholarship scheme introduced earlier in the current year.

Mr. Raison: 168 bids have been received from 67 institutions for the 50 awards available in the academic year 1986-87. In view of this heartening response I have decided to double the number of awards to 100. I am very grateful to these institutions for their willingness to join with ODA in cost sharing arrangements.

St. Helena (Airfield)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there are any plans to construct a new airfield on St. Helena; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: The feasibility of constructing an airstrip on St. Helena for emergency use has been under review. Earlier this year the RAF carried out an aerial reconnaisance survey of a possible site on Prosperous Bay plain. Subsequent investigations, however, suggest that the cost, even for a limited use facility, would be very considerable. There are no plans to implement the proposal.

WALES

Amey Roadstone

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the contracts by his Department to Amey Roadstone and its subsidiaries in excess of £100,000 over the last two financial years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Neither Amey Roadstone nor its subsidiaries were awarded contracts valued in excess of £100,000 during the financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85

Unemployment Statistics

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people have been unemployed for more than 12 months in Wales and Mid-Glamorgan, respectively; and what these figures represent in terms of total unemployment in each area.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In October 1985, 77,412 persons had been unemployed for over 12 months in Wales; this was 42·4 per cent. of the total unemployed. The corresponding figures for Mid-Glamorgan were 16,518 and 46·3 per cent.

European Regional Development Fund

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list Wales's share of the European regional development fund's total allocation to the United Kingdom for each year since 1975 in percentage terms.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply which I gave on 30 October 1985 at column *514-6*.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will introduce legislation to amend the Local Government Act 1972 so as to enable any county district or community council in Wales which so wishes to use only the Welsh form of their name on official documents.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Government's policy is to encourage the use of the English and Welsh forms of the names of local authorities side by side, but, at the request of Dwyfor district council, we are examining the possibility of its, using a mono-lingual Welsh version.

Health Expenditure

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the amount spent by each Welsh health authority from 1974-75 to 1985-86 provisional, breaking down the spending into *(a)* revenue expenditure, *(b)* capital expenditure and *(c)* Welsh Office funded projects, and so on.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Expenditure incurred by Welsh health authorities broken down by *(a)* revenue expenditure, *(b)* capital expenditure, *(c)* family practitioner services expenditure and *(d)* agency payments is listed as follows. This expenditure includes all developments which have been centrally funded by the Welsh Office.

£000

	1974-75	*1975-76*	*1976-77*	*1977-78*	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	**1984-85*	*†1985-86*
Clwyd												
Revenue	17,144	22,620	25,546	28,660	32,460	38,993	52,916	59,244	64,125	66,898	71,638	76,957
Capital	964	1,188	795	1,261	1,820	2,551	2,503	2,899	2,636	2,244	4,474	6,068
FPS	6,108	7,371	8,671	9,969	11,772	13,756	17,180	19,252	23,196	24,171	26,897	—
Agency	53	208	147	110	41	54	55	91	106	135	160	—
TOTAL	24,269	31,387	35,159	40,000	46,093	53,354	72,654	81,486	90,063	93,448	103,169	—
East Dyfed												
Revenue	14,037	18,728	21,041	23,878	27,984	34,000	43,425	48,307	39,698	43,003	46,076	48,006
Capital	314	852	818	829	965	857	793	980	1,274	1,758	2,204	1,552
FPS	5,720	7,003	8,076	9,171	10,749	12,412	15,266	17,509	20,163	21,488	23,728	—
Agency	126	102	106	96	25	34	36	59	63	59	82	—
TOTAL	20,197	26,685	30,041	33,974	39,723	47,303	59,520	66,855	61,198	66,308	72,090	—
Pembrokeshire												
Revenue	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12,942	13,958	15,163	15,572
Capital	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	286	650	1,260	1,812
FPS	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	−5	−5	−1	—
Agency	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	22	35	57	—
TOTAL	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	13,245	14,638	16,479	—
Gwent												
Revenue	22,522	29,463	33,326	37,385	42,554	50,809	65,980	73,047	79,565	84,567	89,279	94,064
Capital	785	1,204	849	1,414	2,078	2,367	1,175	2,956	3,869	3,619	4,101	3,772
FPS	7,539	9,035	10,376	12,239	14,263	16,773	20,611	23,237	27,075	28,883	31,711	—
Agency	168	164	156	96	73	69	92	91	137	181	251	—

	1974-75	1975-76	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	*1984-85	†1985-86
TOTAL	31,014	39,866	44,707	51,134	58,968	69,978	87,858	99,331	110,646	117,250	125,342	—
Gwynedd												
Revenue	9,976	13,256	15,193	17,026	19,137	23,478	30,445	34,257	37,236	39,666	44,204	47,002
Capital	483	854	370	615	701	971	1,336	918	939	1,390	2,811	1,542
FPS	4,524	4,991	6,005	6,884	8,220	9,464	11,648	13,037	14,892	15,947	17,385	—
Agency	53	70	47	84	44	47	74	72	74	92	108	—
TOTAL	15,036	19,171	21,615	24,609	28,102	33,960	43,503	48,284	53,141	57,095	64,508	—
Mid Glamorgan												
Revenue	25,300	33,218	38,069	43,151	49,244	59,618	76,760	84,071	90,806	96,980	104,022	107,426
Capital	1,139	2,088	1,270	1,378	1,764	1,515	1,244	2,050	2,106	2,250	3,013	9,323
FPS	9,851	11,414	13,244	15,342	18,038	20,583	25,337	28,551	33,960	36,038	39,745	—
Agency	257	213	222	278	67	82	95	145	138	240	263	—
TOTAL	36,547	46,933	52,805	60,149	69,113	81,798	103,436	114,817	127,010	135,508	147,043	—
Powys												
Revenue	4,966	6,550	7,380	8,331	9,661	11,797	15,062	16,624	18,516	19,754	20,627	21,388
Capital	234	401	259	309	453	400	309	545	547	554	948	1,138
FPS	1,783	2,196	2,496	2,990	3,543	4,292	5,380	6,108	7,058	7,484	8,271	—
Agency	22	60	31	30	6	9	12	20	15	17	25	—
TOTAL	7,005	9,207	10,166	11,660	13,663	16,498	20,763	23,297	26,136	27,809	29,871	—
South Glamorgan												
Revenue	32,534	41,975	46,999	52,924	59,063	70,655	88,892	98,793	107,438	114,501	119,313	125,594
Capital	1,579	2,482	1,288	2,478	3,018	2,092	3,756	5,502	5,431	5,012	6,245	2,966
FPS	6,867	8,319	9,669	10,930	13,652	14,518	18,747	21,204	24,434	26,169	28,822	—
Agency	272	419	394	391	308	334	425	576	742	614	560	—
TOTAL	41,252	53,195	58,350	66,723	76,041	87,599	111,820	126,075	138,045	146,296	154,940	—
West Glamorgan												
Revenue	16,786	21,842	25,068	28,408	32,025	38,746	50,435	56,665	61,508	65,173	68,867	74,950
Capital	835	1,189	927	1,168	1,844	2,117	2,187	2,513	2,914	2,473	5,259	7,753
FPS	6,298	7,912	9,365	10,812	12,931	14,696	18,053	20,662	23,538	25,057	27,298	—
Agency	230	271	301	187	39	45	89	97	129	136	157	—
TOTAL	24,149	31,214	35,661	40,575	46,839	55,604	70,764	79,937	88,089	92,839	101,381	—
WHTSO (now WHCSA)												
Revenue	1,232	1,471	1,768	1,972	2,199	2,631	3,187	3,705	3,957	4,143	4,403	4,745
Capital	9,212	12,809	11,832	10,810	11,421	11,801	19,274	21,506	27,718	30,509	21,363	17,711
Agency	1	1	4	—	1	1	2	—	10	12	12	—
TOTAL	10,445	14,281	13,604	12,782	13,621	14,433	22,463	25,211	31,685	34,664	25,778	—
Wales												
Revenue	144,497	189,123	214,390	241,735	274,327	330,727	427,102	474,713	515,791	548,643	583,392	615,704
Capital	15,545	23,067	18,408	20,262	24,064	24,671	32,577	39,869	47,720	50,459	51,678	53,637
FPS	48,690	58,241	67,902	78,337	93,168	106,454	132,222	149,560	174,311	185,232	203,856	—
Agency	1,182	1,508	1,408	1,272	604	675	880	1,151	1,436	1,521	1,675	—
TOTAL	209,914	271,939	302,108	341,606	392,163	462,163	592,781	665,293	739,258	785,855	840,601	—

* Provisional.
† Budgeted.

Local Authority Manpower Watch

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library copies of the quarterly joint local authority manpower watch for Wales from the first count to the latest.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Separate returns for Wales have only been issued for the September 1981 quarter and subsequent quarters. Copies are already available in the Library. Previous to that a joint return for England and Wales was published every quarter from the inception of the watch in March 1975 and copies of these are in the Library. I am arranging for a set of quarterly manpower figures for Wales alone, covering the period of joint publication, to be placed in the Library.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Sub-postmasters

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* a detailed statement of disbursements from the fund set up by Her Majesty's Government to augment the income of sub-postmasters following the changes in arrangements for paying some national insurance pensions; what sums have been and are to be paid into this fund; and what plans he has for further payments from it.

Mr. Butcher: On 13 May 1983 my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), the then Secretary of State for Industry, in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) announced that agreement had been reached with the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters on the guidelines for a £2 million fund to help smaller sub-post offices that

would be adversely affected by changes in social security benefit payment methods should new business not grow at the same rate as DHSS business reduced. Copies of the guidelines were subsequently placed in the Library.

As explained in the guidelines the fund has an overall limit of £2 million and will be deemed to be closed on 30 April 1987. The guidelines also made clear that the purpose of the fund is to preserve an adequate sub-post office network; and not necessarily to retain every sub-office or to preserve income. The fund is operated by the Post Office and the Department of Trade and Industry reimburses the Post Office, on a monthly basis, for payments made to sub-postmasters. There are no plans to change the guidelines and payments will continue to be made consistent with them.

The Post Office has been reimbursed by the Department of Trade and Industry for payments to sub-postmasters as follows:

	£
1983-84	
August	2,085·79
September	2,619·10
October	1,721·79
November	2,724·05
December	2,898·13
January	2,474·54
February	3,998·54
March	4,106·03
Total	22,627·97
1984-85	
April	3,699·72
May	3,560·49
June	3,860·95
July	4,481·81
August	4,694·01
September	6,557·00
October	5,222·48
November	5,619·12
December	5,298·22
January	5,679·76
February	6,117·64
March	5,661·06
Total	60,452·26
1985-86	
April	6,040·44
May	5,754·98
June	5,999·90
July	6,298·01
Total	24,093·33

Electronics Industry (United States Inspectors)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the American inspectors who are here to check companies buying American electronics arrived; what is the purpose of their visit; what powers of inspection they possess; how many companies they are visiting; what are the names and addresses of the companies; if any company has refused to see them or raised any objections; and why the Government agreed to these inspections and inquiries being carried out.

Mr. Channon: The United States authorities have sought the Government's agreement to United States officials visiting a number of British companies in connection with the new United States distribution licence regulations. My officials have been in touch with the companies concerned but no such visits have yet been approved. The Government are considering whether to agree to the proposed visits and if so on what terms.

Auctions

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his Department's inquiry into the conduct of auctions; and if he will incorporate in any such inquiry a review of current auction practice, the operation of the buyers' premium and the difference in practice between auctions of personal property and auctions of real property.

Mr. Howard: The consultations which my Department is undertaking are aimed at ascertaining views on the extent to which illegal auction rings may be operating. Some of the responses received so far comment on other aspects of auctions, including the premium charged to buyers, but it is not at present the intention to extend the consultation into these other areas.

Business Statistics (Questionnaires)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will explain *(a)* why his Department's business statistics office has requested that companies involved in the construction and contracting industry should be required to complete questionnaires relating to his Department's full survey of scientific research and development, *(b)* publish the cost of carrying out such a survey, and *(c)* what relevance the information gleaned will have for his Department.

Mr. Butcher: Expenditure on research and development by United Kingdom industry represents its investment in creating and developing new and improved products and processes. This provides an essential basis for future economic growth. Statistics of such expenditure are necessary for informed decisions on policy for research, development, technology and innovation, in my Department and other Government departments.

The full survey of scientific research and development is carried out every four years. It includes all industrial enterprises employing 200 or more persons which expect to incur expenditure on scientific research and development within the United Kingdom during 1985. Construction enterprises satisfying such conditions are included. The average costs to the Department over a four year cycle are estimated to be about £50,000 a year.

Receivership (East Anglia)

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the number of firms taken into receivership in East Anglia during each of the last five years.

Mr. Butcher: The available information relating to insolvencies is given in the table.

Bankruptcies: County Courts in East Anglia

Year	*Number*
1980	150
1981	187
1982	216

Year	Number
1983	306
1984	304
1985*	†240

* To September.
† Provisional.

The bankruptcy figures cover all individuals and partnerships: in England and Wales as a whole approximately three quarters of all bankruptcies relate to unincorporated businesses. Receiving orders and administration orders are included: the total is the net number of cases administered after consolidations and rescissions. The number of bankruptcies since 1 October 1984 may have been reduced compared with earlier periods because of increases in monetary limits on bankruptcy proceedings and deposits on petitions.

Figures for company liquidations are not analysed by area.

"The Observer"

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied that the independent directors appointed to the board of The Observer Ltd., in accordance with the conditions recommended by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in 1981, can effectively exercise the role ascribed to them.

Mr. Howard: Yes. I have had no representations from the independent directors that they are unable to exercise the functions ascribed to them.

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied that all the conditions recommended by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in 1981 for the transfer of The Observer Ltd., to Lonrho are being met in full; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I am satisfied that the conditions attached to the transfer of *The Observer* to George Outram and Company Ltd. in 1981 have been met in so far as they have been applicable hitherto.

Audio and Video Recording Tape

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will list the number of *(a)* meetings his Department has held with groups or individuals supporting a levy on audio and video recording tape, *(b)* meetings with groups or individuals opposing such a levy and *(c)* communications in written or oral form from both sides since June 1984.

Mr. Butcher: It is estimated that since June 1984 Ministers and officials in the Department of Trade and Industry have held about 20 meetings with groups or individuals at which the levy question was discussed. Of these, about two-thirds were with opponents of a levy. It is not possible to estimate the number of communications since June 1984, but over 1,000 written responses have been received to the Green Paper "The Recording & Rental of Audio & Video Copyright Material" (Cmnd. 9445) published in February 1985.

Cement

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give details of the amount of cement imported into the United Kingdom over the last year for which records are available and the preceding five years; and if he will specify the countries of origin, together with the appropriate tonnages.

Mr. Channon: The information is as follows:

	Quantity (thousand metric tonnes)					
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
France	4·7	15·2	6·5	2·1	2·0	11·4
Belgium/Luxembourg	3·2	0·4	7·8	14·2	14·2	10·9
Netherlands	0·4	3·6	29·9	26·6	131·8	137·9
Federal Republic of Germany	0·9	0·3	13·7	48·6	114·3	113·5
Irish Republic	133·7	94·7	129·3	168·0	86·8	73·2
Spain	1·5	0·0	—	0·0	7·1	43·0
German Democratic Republic	—	—	0·0	18·0	54·9	51·6
Poland	0·0	2·9	0·1	0·1	15·8	56·0
Other countries	2·5	0·9	0·8	4·2	1·5	2·1
TOTAL	146·9	118·0	188·1	281·8	428·5	499·6

Source: Country of origin data corresponding to SITC/R2 Sub-group 661·2 in the United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.
Notes:
(i) figures for 1984 are provisional.
(ii) — signifies nil trade; 0·0 signifies trade of less than 50 metric tonnes.
(iii) due to rounding totals shown may not correspond exactly to the sum of constituent items.

Human Tissue

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the use of foetal material in cosmetics breaches the Cosmetics Products Regulations 1984.

Mr. Howard: No. The Cosmetic Products Regulations are concerned with safety in use only. However, I have made inquiries and can find no cases of foetal material used in cosmetics in the United Kingdom.

Football (Television Coverage)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the investigation by the Office of Fair Trading into the relationship between

the British Broadcasting Corporation and Independent Television companies in their dealings with the Football League over the televising of association football and its implications for compliance with competition legislation.

Mr. Howard: The Office of Fair Trading are in touch with the British Broadcasting Corporation and the negotiators for the Independent Television companies as to whether there is any agreement between them concerning negotiations with the football authorities over the televising of association football which might be registrable under the Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976.

British Telecom

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps his Department takes to monitor compliance by British Telecom with the provisions of its licence relating to restrictions on the level of increases in charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The Director-General of Telecommunications is responsible under the provisions of the Telecommunications Act 1984 for monitoring compliance by British Telecommunications plc (BT) with the provisions of its licence. I understand that the director-general scrutinised BT's recent price increases before they were announced and stated publicly that the increase met the obligations and requirements set out in BT's licence.

Isle of Man Steam Packet Company and Sealink (Merger)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Director General of Fair Trading's investigation into the proposed merger between the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company and Sealink.

Mr. Howard: The director general's investigations into the proposed merger between Sealink UK and the Isle of Man Steam Packet Co Ltd were completed earlier this year. My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced on 16 April that he had decided, in accordance with the recommendation of the director general, not to refer the proposed merger to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the gross domestic product per head of each regional area as a proportion of the south east for *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1984 or the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher: The data for the gross domestic product per head (at factor cost) of each regional area as a proportion (in percentage terms) of the South East are shown in the table for *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1983 (the latest available).

	1979	*1983*
United Kingdom	86·7	84·0
South East	100·0	100·0
North	79·1	75·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	80·6	76·8
East Midlands	83·4	79·6
East Anglia	81·7	81·6
South West	81·1	80·4
West Midlands	82·9	74·0
North West	83·4	79·0
England	88·5	85·9
Wales	74·9	70·4
Scotland	83·1	81·0
Northern Ireland	64·5	61·2

Secondary Schools (Enterprise Activity)

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress is being made in promoting enterprise activity in secondary schools.

Mr. Brittan: The Government are concerned to stress the importance of enterprise at all levels of society and my Department has therefore established a Mini-Enterprises in Schools Project to encourage every middle and secondary school to take part in mini-enterprise activity during industry year 1986.

The project is to be based at Warwick University with regional co-ordinators throughout the United Kingdom. The Project Team will be seeking to help local education authorities and schools understand and adopt various methods of enterprise activity. It will also be seeking to provide teacher training courses on request from local education authorities and schools.

The project is also being supported by National Westminster Bank who are providing a cash grant of £30 to each participating school in England and Wales as well as a £50 overdraft facility at 5 per cent. interest for each mini-enterprise. In addition, bank staff will hold an interview with each mini-enterprise to discuss the application for an overdraft facility.

The project is an important element of the response by my Department to Industry Year. It will provide an opportunity for young people to understand something about business and commerce while also learning about working together and about dealing with the local community. I hope that all schools will seek to take advantage of the help available under it.

Rolls-Royce Ltd.

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how it is proposed to fund preliminary expenses in connection with the sale of shares in Rolls-Royce.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, a sum of £100,000 will be required in the current financial year. The new cash limit created for class IV Vote 27 will be offset be a reduction of £50,000 each in the cash limits of class IV Vote 6 from £379,449,000 to £379,399,000 and class IV Vote 17 from £146,413,000 to £146,363,000 and will not therefore involve any net change in public expenditure.

European Steel Council

Mr. Martin Stevens asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Steel Council on 29 October.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I welcome the agreement reached by Community Industry Ministers in Luxembourg

in the early hours of 30 October on a new system of steel production quotas and a new code governing state aids to the steel industry from 1 January 1986. Quotas on coated sheet and reinforcement bar will be lifted from 1 January 1986 as a first step towards a return to a free market; the effects of this will be monitored so that, if necessary, controls can be reintroduced. In addition, the agreement on quantities should permit BSC to sustain its share of the United Kingdom market as of right, without recourse to the expensive and uncertain quota purchases they have had to make under the current quota system.

The new state aids code will ban all investment and operating aids, and the Commission will scrutinise all payments by Governments to steel firms to ensure they comply with the new and much more stringent permitted aids and are on commercial terms. This tough regime should protect both the private and public sector against the risk of subsidies to their continental competitors.

PRIME MINISTER

Steel Plating Mill (Mexico)

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister how much money Her Majesty's Government have approved for the construction of a steel plating mill at Sicartsa, Mexico; how much has been spent; when it is expected that the mill will be completed; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: In 1982 Her Majesty's Government made available to the Government of Mexico a £34·94 million grant under the aid and trade provision towards the cost of the United Kingdom content of a £320 million contract for the supply of a steel plate mill awarded to Davy McKee. In addition ECGD also supported loans of £198 million and DM 151 million. All but £5,000 of the grant has been disbursed to the United Kingdom company for plant and materials supplied. The loans have not yet been fully utilised.

The Mexican Government informed Her Majesty's Government in June 1985 that the project had been suspended due to Mexico's economic difficulties, but that existing contracts with foreign suppliers would be honoured. It is not yet known what the Mexican Government's intentions are in the longer term for the completion of the project.

Farm Produce (Fraud)

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister what is the latest estimated figure for the level of suspected fraud in the trade of farm produce within the auspices of the European Economic Community; what proposals she has to tighten procedures against such fraud (i) in Britain and (ii) in the European Economic Community; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The European Commission makes no estimate of the cost to Community funds of suspected fraud in trade in farm produce. The European Court of Auditors has recommended improved controls on refunds on agricultural products. We are making every effort to ensure that their recommendations and other improvements are implemented in the Community. We shall ourselves continue to take all possible steps to prevent frauds, to prosecute those responsible when we have evidence that an offence has been committed and to seek to recover through the civil courts sums fraudulently acquired.

Draft Emergency Legislation

Mr. McNamara asked the Prime Minister if she will publish the draft emergency legislation prepared by Her Majesty's Government as a contingency for wartime implementation; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. Successive Governments have recognised the duty to keep under review preparations against attack, including the need for emergency legislation. But it has always been clear that the content and introduction of such powers will be for consideration by the Government and Parliament of the day, having regard to all the circumstances at the time. There has been no change in that position.

EUREKA Project

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the objectives of the EUREKA project and Her Majesty's Government's financial contribution to it.

The Prime Minister: The declaration of principles agreed by the 18 participating countries and the Commission of the European Communities at the conference of Ministers in Hanover on 6 November 1985, announced their intention to use EUREKA to:

stimulate collaboration on civilian, high technology projects to raise the productivity and competitiveness of Europe's industries on the world market;

promote the establishment of a large, homogenous, dynamic and outward-looking European economic area as essential to EUREKA's success.

The financing of EUREKA projects will vary according to their nature and their participants. A number of the projects involving United Kingdom firms are likely to qualify for finance from existing United Kingdom schemes of support for which they are eligible. However, the Government consider that, since EUREKA projects are aimed at developing internationally competitive high technology products, processes and services, they should in the main rely on financing from commercial sources. We have no plans to set up a specific fund for EUREKA projects.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

International Youth Year

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much grant has been paid by his Department towards International Youth Year 1985.

Mr. Dunn: The Department has given the following sums to International Youth Year 1985 in the form of grant aid to the International Youth Year National Co-ordinating Committee for England.

	£
1982-83	1,350
1983-84	25,000
1984-85	107,500
1985-86	115,000

CERN

Dr. Bray asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what statement he proposes to make on the British contribution to CERN at the December meeting of the CERN Council.

Mr. Brooke: There are no plans for the United Kingdom delegate to make any such statement at the December meeting of the CERN Council.

Open University

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of the income of the Open University has been derived from grants from his Department in each year from its establishment to 1984, inclusive; what plans he has to maintain its courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The figures are not immediately available and I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible. Decisions on what courses to offer are a matter for the Open University.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics (Wandsworth)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Paymaster General what was the number of people registered as unemployed in the London borough of Wandsworth in May 1979; and what is the present number.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 10 October 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the London borough of Wandsworth was 16,728. Comparable figures for May 1979 are not available because of changes in the way figures are collected. However, the number registered unemployed in jobcentre areas approximating to the London borough of Wandsworth in May 1979 was 5,698.

Trade Union Rule Books

Mr. Gregory asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to which trade unions have altered their rule books to comply with the Government's trade union legislation since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Trade unions wishing to retain political funds must test membership support through ballots conducted in accordance with rules approved by the certification officer. The following unions have had such rules approved:

- Association of Cinematograph Television and Allied Technicians
- Association of Professional Executive Clerical and Computer Staff
- Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
- Association of Scientific Technical and Managerial Staffs
- Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers
- Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union
- Confederation of Health Service Employees
- Electrical Electronic Telecommunication and Plumbing Union
- Furniture Timber and Allied Trades Union
- General Municipal Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union
- Iron and Steel Trades Confederation
- Musicians Union
- National Communications Union
- National Graphical Association
- National Union of Blind and Disabled
- National Union of Domestic Appliances and General Operatives
- National Union of Footwear Leather and Allied Trades
- National Union of Public Employees
- National Union of Railwaymen
- National Union of Scalemakers
- National Union of Seamen
- National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers
- Power Loom, Carpet Weavers and Textile Workers Union
- Society of Graphical and Allied Trades (1982)
- Technical Administrative and Supervisory Section
- Tobacco Workers Union
- Transport and General Workers Union
- Transport Salaried Staffs Association
- Union of Communication Workers
- Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians
- Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers

Apart from this, the requirements imposed on trade unions by the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts and the Trade Union Act 1984 apply whether or not their rule books have been amended to take them into account. Most rule books are silent on questions like, for example, ballots before strikes and neither prevent unions from complying with the legislation nor in themselves require them to do so. In practice, rule changes are only likely to be adopted to give effect to the election provisions of the 1984 Act, which came into force on 1 October. A number of unions have reportedly decided to make changes in their rule books to comply with these provisions. These are listed as follows. Others are considering changes. For some unions no changes will be necessary:

- Association of Professional Executive Clerical and Computer Staff (APEX)
- Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs (ASTMS)
- Amalgamated Society of Textile Workers and Kindred Trades
- British Association of Colliery Management (BACM)
- British Airline Pilots Association (BALPA)
- British Medical Association (BMA)
- Clearing Bank Union (CBU)
- Engineers and Managers Association (EMA)
- Electrical Power Engineers Association (EPEA)
- National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers (NACODS)
- National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO)
- National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE)
- National Communications Union (NCU)
- Natwest Staff Association
- Transport Salaried Staff Association (TSSA)
- Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians (UCATT)

Labour Statistics

Mr. Foulkes asked the Paymaster General if he will list for each of the last 10 years the largest sectors of employment in the United Kingdom; and if he will tabulate for each year *(a)* the numbers employed in each sector and *(b)* the percentage of the total working population employed in that sector.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is shown in the following table.

Civilian employed labour force in the United Kingdom: June

Industry division	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
										thousands
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	676	676	671	658	647	635	635	628	623	621
Energy and water supply industries	721	718	717	722	726	710	685	660	631	607
Extraction of minerals and ores other than fuels; manufacture of metals, mineral products and chemicals	1,164	1,183	1,164	1,151	1,082	944	892	827	805	801
Metal goods, engineering and vehicles industries	3,368	3,394	3,417	3,413	3,307	2,965	2,812	2,682	2,644	2,629
Other manufacturing industries	2,892	2,895	2,852	2,836	2,695	2,460	2,343	2,249	2,252	2,241
Construction	1,586	1,513	1,534	1,600	1,626	1,534	1,463	1,428	1,454	1,444
Distribution, hotels and catering; repairs	4,661	4,718	4,761	4,906	5,002	4,883	4,877	4,891	5,136	5,289
Transport and communications	1,534	1,529	1,546	1,563	1,577	1,522	1,466	1,417	1,423	1,411
Banking, finance, insurance, business services and leasing	1,646	1,667	1,718	1,794	1,863	1,927	1,977	2,035	2,106	2,197
Other services	6,242	6,230	6,301	6,419	6,457	6,410	6,419	6,454	6,583	6,680
										per cent. of working population
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2·6	2·6	2·5	2·5	2·4	2·4	2·4	2·4	2·3	2·3
Energy and water supply industries	2·8	2·7	2·7	2·7	2·7	2·7	2·6	2·5	2·3	2·2
Extraction of minerals and ores other than fuels; manufacture of metals, mineral products and chemicals	4·5	4·5	4·4	4·3	4·0	3·5	3·3	3·1	3·0	2·9
Metal goods, engineering and vehicles industries	12·9	12·9	13·0	12·8	12·3	11·1	10·5	10·1	13·5	9·6
Other manufacturing industries	11·1	11·0	10·8	10·7	10·0	9·2	8·8	8·6	8·3	8·2
Construction	6·1	5·8	5·8	6·0	6·1	5·7	5·5	5·4	5·4	5·3
Distribution, hotels and catering; repairs	17·9	18·0	18·1	18·4	18·7	18·3	18·3	18·4	19·0	19·3
Transport and communications	5·9	5·8	5·9	5·9	5·9	5·7	5·5	5·3	5·3	5·1
Banking, finance, insurance, business services and leasing	6·3	6·4	6·5	6·7	6·9	7·2	7·4	7·7	8·0	8·0
Other services	23·9	23·8	23·9	24·1	24·1	24·0	24·1	24·3	24·4	24·4

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General what are his most recent estimates of the numbers of jobs created *(a)* for employees and *(b)* for the self-employed in both part-time and full-time jobs for each of the regional areas of England, and for Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about job gains and job losses is not available from the Department's statistics, but an indication of the net changes can be seen by comparing levels of employment at different dates.

The following table gives the comparisons between levels of employment at June 1984 and June 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, for the areas specified. Estimates of part-time employees in employment at these dates are available only for females. The estimates of the self-employed do not separately identify those in part-time and full-time employment.

Net changes in levels of employment between June 1984 and June 1985

	Employees in Employment		*Self-employed*
	Total	*Part-time females*	*Total*
South East	83,000	58,000	49,000
Greater London (included in South East)	8,000	9,000	*
East Anglia	15,000	8,000	7,000
South West	11,000	18,000	3,000
West Midlands	9,000	11,000	12,000
East Midlands	9,000	5,000	6,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	−2,000	12,000	12,000
North West	16,000	29,000	14,000
North	−8,000	6,000	2,000
Scotland	6,000	22,000	12,000
Wales	−4,000	7,000	9,000

* Not available.

Gas Explosions

Mr. Michie asked the Paymaster General if he will give figures for the number of gas explosions reported *(a)* in the home and *(b)* in the gas supply in the past three years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is not available in the form requested. The number of incidents involving fires and/or explosions reported by the British Gas Corporation in the last three years is as follows:

Number of Incidents (Fires/Explosions)

Year	*Number*
1982	150
1983	134
1984	130

Small Businesses

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General (1) what is his estimate of the proportion of small businesses formed since 1979 which after *(a)* one year and *(b)* two years were or are employing 10 or more workers;

(2) what is his estimate of the proportion of small businesses formed since 1979 which were or are still trading after *(a)* one year and *(b)* two years;

(3) what is his estimate of the average number of jobs that has been created by small businesses formed since 1979;

(4) if he will provide a regional breakdown of the number of jobs created by small businesses since 1979.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Labour Statistics (Birkenhead)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Paymaster General if he will give a detailed breakdown of the number of jobless

in Birkenhead, covering the distribution between *(a)* sexes and *(b)* skilled and unskilled; and if this data could also be presented by age and by duration.'

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in the Birkenhead parliamentary constituency as at 10 October 1985, analysed by sex and by the age of the unemployed and duration of unemployment.

The records on which the unemployment count is based do not include details of qualifications or previous trades or professions because these are not needed for the purposes of administering benefits. The labour force survey collects information about the qualifications, previous occupation and previous industry of people who are not working and are looking for work, but the sample size is too small to provide estimates at local level.

Age and Duration Analysis of the Unemployed for Statistical Date 10 October 1985
Parliamentary Constituencies AD

Birkenhead BC

Males

Duration of Unemployment in weeks	*Under 17*	*17*	*18*	*19*	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30-34*	*35-39*	*40-44*	*45-49*	*50-54*	*55-59*	*60 and over*	*Total*
One or less	3	6	6	5	42	15	8	11	5	5	3	2	3	114
Over 1 and up to 2	4	9	10	9	35	18	12	7	13	6	2	5	6	136
Over 2 and up to 4	13	14	16	18	70	33	20	20	17	8	6	17	11	263
Over 4 and up to 6	47	30	39	10	54	28	22	14	16	9	8	17	4	298
Over 6 and up to 8	2	16	14	10	43	18	26	16	28	27	14	17	5	236
Over 8 and up to 13	3	31	21	20	101	58	38	36	31	21	14	21	13	408
Over 13 and up to 26	11	50	42	52	188	110	71	66	43	45	32	39	11	760
Over 26 and up to 39	5	20	29	33	114	80	58	51	39	20	25	25	20	519
Over 39 and up to 52	0	18	33	22	124	100	63	56	29	41	34	33	27	580
Over 52 and up to 65	0	28	35	35	85	80	44	37	41	30	26	34	18	493
Over 65 and up to 78	0	6	24	17	77	40	34	22	18	23	21	23	4	309
Over 78 and up to 104	0	0	22	32	111	81	67	69	49	52	38	42	1	564
Over 104 and up to 156	0	0	25	47	152	109	82	91	66	47	47	65	3	734
Over 156 and up to 208	0	0	0	13	151	102	74	75	60	55	71	61	2	664
Over 208 and up to 260	0	0	0	0	79	76	66	68	59	36	55	57	0	496
Over 260	0	0	0	0	81	155	154	168	101	139	128	111	3	1040
Total over 52 weeks	0	34	106	144	736	643	521	530	394	382	386	393	31	4,300
Grand totals Males	88	228	316	323	1,507	1,103	839	807	615	564	524	569	131	7,614

Females

Duration of Unemployment in weeks	*Under 17*	*17*	*18*	*19*	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30-34*	*35-39*	*40-44*	*45-49*	*50-54*	*55-59*	*60 and over*	*Total*
One or less	7	7	7	1	16	5	4	1	3	0	3	0	0	54
Over 1 and up to 2	5	4	2	6	20	14	6	5	5	0	4	0	0	71
Over 2 and up to 4	9	6	8	8	36	10	3	5	8	4	1	2	0	100
Over 4 and up to 6	46	22	38	11	23	13	14	8	3	6	4	9	0	197
Over 6 and up to 8	3	14	10	6	14	12	5	1	1	2	6	1	0	75
Over 8 and up to 13	2	18	13	14	52	24	18	10	5	3	6	5	0	170
Over 13 and up to 26	7	43	24	24	84	52	36	19	15	17	11	14	0	346
Over 26 and up to 39	3	27	18	16	49	34	26	12	6	14	12	9	0	226
Over 39 and up to 52	0	11	18	22	53	43	14	7	10	10	6	12	0	206
Over 52 and up to 65	0	13	24	22	29	26	13	8	10	7	4	17	0	173
Over 65 and up to 78	0	3	8	9	28	11	3	5	4	11	7	6	0	95
Over 78 and up to 104	0	0	8	13	39	20	13	6	9	19	14	15	0	156
Over 104 and up to 156	0	0	8	17	51	18	13	11	13	11	20	25	0	187
Over 156 and up to 208	0	0	0	6	46	11	10	10	6	18	19	15	0	141
Over 208 and up to 260	0	0	0	0	26	6	7	2	3	6	13	13	0	76
Over 260	0	0	0	0	18	24	13	5	10	7	19	19	1	116
Total over 52 weeks	0	16	48	67	237	116	72	47	55	79	96	110	1	944
Grand totals Females	82	168	186	175	584	323	198	115	111	135	149	162	1	2,389

ENERGY

Semi-submersible Tharos (Incident)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the incident in the North sea, 100 miles north-east of Aberdeen, when the semi-submersible vessel Tharos which was located at the BP Forties field was forced to evacuate 140 persons employed on the vessel.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: During the afternoon of 5 November 1985 the offshore installation MSV Tharos was at anchor alongside BP's Forties Alpha production installation. At 1525hrs, because of deteriorating weather conditions the bridge between Tharos and Forties Alpha was raised and Tharos move away.

The weather was classed as "severe gales" with winds gusting up to 100 knots when one of the eight anchor cables holding the Tharos on station failed. Subsequently other anchors dragged or had to be released to maintain the stability of the Tharos. Its own motive power was used to assist in keeping it on location.

As a precautionary measure all persons, not essential to the task of ensuring the safety of the installation were evacuated, as soon as possible, by helicopter, to nearby installations and to shore. One hundred and forty, persons were evacuated leaving 37 on board.

The emergency systems worked as intended and no person was put at extra risk.

The installation is expectation to come into sheltered waters for examination.

The incident is being investigated by my Inspectors.

THORP

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the current projected cost for the completion of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant compared with the expected cost given to the Windscale inquiry in 1977, in constant terms; and how the capital costs for THORP are broken down in percentage terms between British Nuclear Fuels Ltd., the Central Electricity Generating Board, the Department of Energy, and foreign customers.

Mr. Goodlad: The estimated cost of THORP in January 1985 money values is £1,250 million. This is broadly equivalent, after allowance for inflation, to the cost estimate given to the Windscale Inquiry of £580 million at mid-1977 prices. The costs are allocated approximately one-third to the United Kingdom generating boards and two-thirds to overseas customers.

Plutonium

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether any consignments of plutonium exported for civil purposes from the United Kingdom have ever been re-transferred to a different state, without the prior knowledge of the United Kingdom Government.

Mr. Goodlad: No such case has come to my attention.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Energy what advantage would be gained by other countries if the total amount and isotopic composition of plutonium produced in all civil magnox reactors since commissioning were to be published.

Mr. Goodlad: I would refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Merionnydd and Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) on 25 January 1985 at column *545*. I then gave the total of plutonium derived from these reactors except for the quantity consigned to the United States before 1971 under the United States-United Kingdom mutual defence agreement. The then United States Energy Secretary Mr. Hodel stated last year that this material has been used only for civil purposes. However, its quantity and isotopic composition cannot be revealed in view of its relationship to the quantity of highly enriched uranium received by the United Kingdom for defence purposes and in consequence the information could assist in calculations of the United Kingdom's defence potential.

British Gas (Money Exchanges)

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table of money exchanges between British Gas and central Government in the years 1972-73 to 1983-84, comparable with that given for 1984-85 on page 22 of the British Gas Corporation's annual report 1984-85.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: This is a matter for the corporation and I am asking the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Nationalised Industries (Accounts)

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library a copy of the accounts directions under which the nationalised coal, electricity and gas industries currently prepare their accounts.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The latest accounts directions for the National Coal Board, the British Gas Corporation, the Central Electricity Generating Board, and the 12 area electricity boards in England and Wales are published in their respective reports and accounts for 1983-84; and that for the Electricity Council in its statement of accounts and statistics 1983-84, a companion volume to its annual report for 1983-84. Copies of these documents are available in the Library of the House.

Gas Levy

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether the gas levy will remain in effect after the privatisation of British Gas.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The fiscal regime applicable to British Gas following privatisation will be made clear before the sale takes place.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Land Classification

Mr. Heddle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how far his Department has progressed in its review of the agricultural land classification system for England and Wales; and when the results of the study are likely to be made available;

(2) if he will place in the Library the technical documents and supporting papers produced by his Department as background to the review of the agricultural land classification system.

Mrs. Fenner: My Department is currently reviewing the agricultural land classification system to improve the quantitative basis of some of the technical criteria used to define land quality grades. This work is being carried out by ADAS specialists in collaboration with the Soil Survey of England and Wales and the Meteorological Office. A number of interested organisations have also been kept informed. The review is now well advanced and we hope to circulate a consultation paper in 1986. There are no technical developments or background papers I could usefully place in the Library of the house.

Crop Spraying

Mr. Wareing asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what recent representations he has received about crop spraying on or near to built-up areas;

(2) when he expects to issue a consultation paper on crop spraying in or near to built-up areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: Since the enactment of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 we have received a number of inquiries from hon. Members about restricting crop spraying activities in or near bult-up areas. The Government recently circulated for comment their proposals for strengthening the already considerable controls in this area in the consultative document issued

on 1 November, which deals with the regulations to be made under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 to control the use of all pesticides. A copy of the document has been placed in the Library of the House.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Gibraltar

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of his talks with the Chief Minister of Gibraltar regarding the Spanish Government's proposals for the future of Gibraltar.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend had a useful talk with the Chief Minister of Gibraltar on 4 November. They discussed a wide range of issues relating to Gibraltar including the proposals for the future of Gibraltar received from the Spanish Government. Details of their discussions remain confidential.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he proposes to meet Senor Fernandez Ordonez, the Spanish Foreign Minister, to discuss the Spanish Government's proposals for the future of the the dependent territory of Gibraltar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend will be having wide-ranging discussions with the Spanish Foreign Minister on international and bilateral issues, including Gibraltar, during his visit to Madrid on 5-6 December 1985.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it remains the policy of Her Majesty's Government to continue to observe the preamble to the 1969 Gibraltar constitution that Britain will not enter any arrangements in which sovereignty is transferred against the freely expressed wishes of the people of the dependent territory of Gibraltar.

Mr. Eggar: Yes.

Libya

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's current relations with Libya.

Mr. Renton: We have at present no plans to resume diplomatic relations with Libya.

Hong Kong and Singapore

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Hong Kong and Singapore.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend has not made a recent visit to Hong Kong or Singapore. But I visited Hong Kong between 27 and 31 October, and stopped over in Singapore on 31 October on my way to Indonesia. In Hong Kong I was able to see recent developments in the territory, to meet a broad cross section of Hong Kong people, and to hold wide-ranging discussions with the Executive Council and Government officials. I attended the opening session of the new Legislative Council. My brief visit to Singapore enabled me to have a useful meeting with the Singaporean Minister of State for Health and Foreign Affairs.

Singapore

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's present relations with Singapore.

Mr. Renton: Our relations with Singapore are excellent and based on mutual interest which we shall continue to promote. We attach importance to Singapore as a member of ASEAN contributing to the stability and development of south-east Asia, where the United Kingdom has substantial interests, and playing a respected role in international affairs.

Indonesia

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have recently made to the Government of Indonesia concerning the repression of human rights.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 28 October. I discussed the whole question of human rights particularly on East Timor with senior Indonesian officials when visiting Jakarta last week.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent official visit to Indonesia.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend has not made a recent official visit to Indonesia, but I was there earlier this month to attend a conference on our regional heads of mission in Jakarta. Whilst there, I had useful discussions with Indonesian Ministers and officials.

Afghanistan

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's current relations with Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: As my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), said on 21 February 1984 we have no substantive dealings with the Karmal regime. Following the Soviet invasion in December 1979, we withdrew Her Majesty's ambassador in Kabul and suspended our aid programme to Afghanistan.

Falkland Islands (Film)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why he refused permission for the Mata Boyd television production company from Argentina to film on the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Eggar: Entry into the Falkland Islands is a matter for the Falkland Islands Government, who did not consider such a visit to be appropriate.

Plutonium

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to support the US Government policy position, as stated by Richard Perle on 29 June in Geneva, to oppose any global movement of plutonium intended for commercial peaceful uses.

Mr. Renton: We have no record of such a statement. We see no reason to oppose the use of plutonium in civil power reactors and the consequent international movement of the material provided that stringent precautions are taken.

Policy regarding transfer of plutonium from reprocessing operations in the United Kingdom remains as set out in the statement by the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), on 22 March 1978. For transfers within the EC this is applied in conformity with the EC ministerial declaration of 20 November 1984.

Non-proliferation Treaty

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* all organisations from which his Department has received representations or correspondence on the nuclear non-proliferation treaty since September 1984.

Mr. Renton: The information is as follows:

Bedford Peace
British Atlantic Committee
British Council of Churches
Campaign for Defence and Multilateral Disarmament
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Catholic Fund for Development
Centre for European Policy Studies
Chiltern Peace Campaign North
Christian Aid
Church of England (Peace Consultation)
Church of Scotland, Church and Nation Committee
Coalition for Peace through Security
Committee for International Justice and Peace
Council for Arms Control
Ecology Party
European Nuclear Disarmament
European Proliferation Information Centre
Friends of the Earth
Great Peace Journey
Greenpeace International
International Institute for Strategic Studies
Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies
International Physicians for the prevention of Nuclear War
London School of Economics
National Peace Council
Nuclear Control Institute, Washington
Nuclear Weapons Freeze UK
Peace through NATO
Pugwash Executive Committee
Religious Society of Friends/Quaker Peace and Service
Roman Catholic Bishops Conference
St. Andrews Defence Research Group
Third World First
United Nations Association
University of Poona, India
University of Southampton, Department of Politics
University of Sussex, Science Policy Research Unit
Uranium Institute
War on Want
Women and Families for Defence
World Association of World Federalists
World Disarmament Campaign
World Development Movement

Commonwealth Commission (Membership)

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what bodies or individuals were invited to suggest names for a British representative for the Commonwealth Commission which is to visit South Africa.

Mr. Rifkind: Under the terms of the Commonwealth accord my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was made responsible for the nomination of a suitable participant. My noble Friend Lord Barber was accordingly nominated after due consultation.

Immigration

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present time lag between the application for a special voucher to settle in the United Kingdom and the interview in New Delhi; why Mr. Shailesh Mehta's application on 24 January 1978 will not get an interview until February 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Applicants for special vouchers interviewed and issued with their vouchers in New Delhi last month applied in October-November 1977.

The annual quota for special vouchers for India has remained at 600; demand has exceeded this figure. In recent years the number of new applicants has declined which we anticipate will be reflected in a shortening of waiting times.

The position relating to Mr. Mehta was explained to the hon. Gentleman in my letter of 30 October.

East Timor

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for relations between the United Kingdom and Indonesia of the continued occupation by Indonesia of East Timor.

Mr. Renton: The Indonesian Government are well aware of our policy on East Timor and of our support for the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General to promote a just settlement there. Our attitude on this question in no way prejudices our good relations with Indonesia, which were recently reinforced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's visit there in April. I duscussed East Timor with senior Indonesian officials when in Jakarta last week.

SCOTLAND

A68 Bypass

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the dates of commencement and completion of the A68 bypass at Newtown-St. Boswells.

Mr. Younger: Work on this scheme is planned to start in the spring of 1987, subject to the satisfactory resolution of outstanding objections and the availability of finance. Construction will take two years.

Peterhead Prison (Incident)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the incident which toook place at Peterhead prison on Saturday 2 November when seven prison officers were held hostage by prisoners for two and a half hours before being released from a barricaded cell block by other prison officers.

Mr. John MacKay: As the incident referred to is currently the subject of a police investigation and possible court proceedings it would be inappropriate for me to make a statement at this stage.

Housing

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was public expenditure on housing in Scotland at constant prices for each financial year from 1974-75 to 1985-86, inclusive.

Mr. Ancram: The table shows public expenditure on housing in Scotland in both net and gross terms (that is, exclusive and inclusive of net capital receipts). It also shows the gross capital investment figures subsumed within the gross expenditure total, since the distinction between capital investment and subsidies is an important one.

£ million

	Total net expenditure	*Total gross expenditure*	*Gross Capital expenditure*
1974-75	1,345·4	1,390·7	1,197·8
1975-76	1,245·6	1,286·0	1,140·0
1976-77	1,159·2	1,195·2	722·8
1977-78	1,012·6	1,048·0	621·1
1978-79	992·0	1,031·5	575·9
1979-80	1,073·2	1,112·9	598·8
1980-81	963·6	1,025·6	559·7
1981-82	807·6	910·4	539·3
1982-83	724·8	894·4	589·8
1983-84	717·2	954·8	699·5
1984-85	623·5	817·8	575·5
1985-86	535·7	702·1	519·1

Note: The figures were produced by applying the GDP deflator (base year 1983-84).

Amey Roadstone (Contracts)

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to Amey Roadstone and its subsidiaries in excess of £100,000 over the last two financial years.

Mr. Ancram: There have been none in this period.

Meningitis

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Chief Medical Officer of Scotland issued any guidance to other health boards arising out of the outbreak of meningitis in Lanarkshire in the last year.

Mr. John MacKay: No.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any medical sources have made representations to him regarding the outbreak of meningitis in Lanarkshire in the last year.

Mr. John MacKay: No.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any reports from Lanarkshire health board regarding the outbreak of meningitis in Lanarkshire in 1984 and 1985; and if there were any indications that the outbreak involved the communication of the disease by any carrier whether human or otherwise.

Mr. John MacKay: Lanarkshire health board prepared a report on the outbreak and this has been submitted to the Scottish Home and Health Department. This report does not identify the cause of the increased incidence of meningitis in the Lanarkshire health board area during this period.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department issued any advice or instructions to the Lanarkshire health board regarding the outbreak of meningitis in 1984 and 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Although the Scottish Home and Health Department did not offer any advice to Lanarkshire health board, the board had appropriate advice from its own medical specialists and from the directors of the communicable diseases (Scotland) unit and the Meningococcus reference laboratory (Scotland) at Ruchill hospital, Glasgow.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what inquiries were undertaken by his Department into the outbreak of meningitis in the Lanarkshire area this and last year.

Mr. John MacKay: My professional advisers were satisfied that Lanarkshire health board took appropriate action to control the disease, and it was not considered necessary for the Scottish Home and Health Department to undertake any further inquiries into this outbreak.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many notifications of meningitis have been made in the last four months; if any of them have led to death; and, of them, how many occurred in the Lanarkshire health board area.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

	Scotland	*Lanarkshire Health Board area*
1. Number of notifications of meningitis in the period 29 June-1 November 1985	35	7
2. Number of death in the period 1 July-19 October 1985 (provisional)	4	1

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many deaths from meningitis, by health board areas, have been notified in each of the last five years.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Deaths from meningitis by health board area, 1980-1984

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Borders	—	—	—	1	—
Forth Valley	3	1	1	—	1
Dumfries & Galloway	1	2	1	2	—
Fife	—	—	2	1	—
Grampian	2	2	—	1	4
Highland	1	1	—	1	2
Lothian	5	7	3	5	5

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Argyll & Clyde	3	2	1	10	—
Ayrshire & Arran	2	3	1	2	5
Greater Glasgow	7	5	7	3	5
Lanarkshire	10	3	6	5	2
Tayside	2	1	3	4	1
Orkney Islands	—	—	—	—	—
Western Islands	—	—	—	—	—
Scotland	36	27	25	35	25

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of meningitis have been reported in Scotland in the last 12-month period available; how that compares with the previous 12-month period; and, of them, how many were in the area of the Lanarkshire health board.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

	Scotland	Lanarkshire Health Board
1. Number of notifications of meningitis for year ending 2 November 1984	198	16
2. Number of notificaions of meningitis for year ending 1 November 1985	146	40

Acid Rain

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Forestry Commission staff have made official visits to examine tree damage attributed to acid rain in *(a)* Sweden, *(b)* France, *(c)* Holland, *(d)* Germany and *(e)* Switzerland in 1985; and on which dates.

Mr. John MacKay: Forestry Commission staff have made the following such visits to date this year—three members of staff visited the Vosges forests in France in June, one the northern Black forest in West Germany in September and one in the southern Black forest in October. There have been no official visits by commission staff for this purpose to Sweden, the Netherlands or Switzerland this year.

Drug Dependency Units

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many specialist drug dependency units are currently operating in Scottish hospitals.

Mr. Younger: The term "drug dependency unit" is not used in Scotland. Drug misusers in Scotland who require hospital care are usually treated as outpatients at mental hospitals and psychiatric units. In addition, there are two hospital-based clinics in Scotland which provide services specifically for drug misusers. These are situated at the Southern general hospital, Glasgow and Woodilee hospital, Glasgow.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of people employed in the manufacturing sector in Scotland at the latest date for which records are available.

Mr. Younger: The number of employees in employment in the manufacturing sector in Scotland in June 1985 is provisionally estimated to have been 432,000. This estimate is not seasonally adjusted.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has as to how many women were unemployed though not entitled to claim benefit in Scotland in October 1985; and what percentage of the total number of unemployed women in Scotland this figure represents.

Mr. Younger: Accordingly to information available from the 1984 labour force survey, an estimated 70,000 women were without jobs and seeking work, but not claiming benefits, in Scotland in the Spring of 1984. This represents 54 per cent. of the total number of female job seekers identified by the survey. However, the same survey also showed that an estimated 44,000 women, who were included in the unemployment count, were either not seeking work, or had a paid job. This latter category included, for example, women who earned a small amount for low-pay, part-time jobs and women who became unemployed or started a job part way through the reference week.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of people employed in the service sector in Scotland at the latest date for which records are available.

Mr. Younger: The number of employees in employment in the service sector in Scotland in June 1985 is provisionally estimated to have been 1,272,000. This estimate is not seasonally adjusted.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the percentage change in numbers employed in the service sector in Scotland in the first six months of 1985.

Mr. Younger: The number of employees in employment in the service sector in Scotland is provisionally estimated to have risen by less than 0·1 per cent. on a seasonally adjusted basis between December 1984 and June 1985.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many women in Scotland were in part-time employment in the service sector on 1 June 1979 and 1 June 1985, respectively.

Mr. Younger: The number of women in part-time employment in the service sector is estimated to have been as follows:

	Number
June 1979	294,000
June 1985	374,000

The figures have not been adjusted for seasonal variation, and the 1985 figure is provisional.

Youth Training

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of youth training scheme leavers in Scotland who left the scheme in each of the months from June 1984 to June 1985 were in *(a)* full-time employment and *(b)* part-time employment three months later.

Mr. Younger: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Earnings

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average weekly gross earnings in Scotland at the latest date for which records are available of (i) a full-time manual male employee in the manufacturing sector, (ii) a full-time manual female employee in the service sector and (iii) a part-time female manual employee in the service sector.

Mr. Younger: The average weekly gross earnings in April 1985 of employees in employment on adult rates, not affected by absence was as follows:

	£
i. full-time manual male employees in manufacturing industries	176
ii. full-time manual female employees in service industries	92

These estimates are based on the 1985 New Earnings Survey and will be included in the Part E report to be published in January 1985. No figure is available for part-time female manual employees in service industries.

Campsie, Baldernoch Local Plan

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the individuals and firms from whom he has received representations regarding the Campsie, Baldernoch local plan.

Mr. Ancram: I shall write to the hon. Member with this information.

Amphetamines

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland have been charged with *(a)* possession of and *(b)* supplying amphetamines in each of the last five years.

Mr. Younger: The numbers of persons proceeded against or dealt with in other ways (such as reference to the reporter) for such offences in the last five years are as follows.

Amphetamines

Type of offence	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Unlawful possession	36	30	86	120	239
Possession with intent to supply unlawfully	7	1	14	24	31
Unlawful supply	3	2	2	14	5

Note: A person dealt with for more than one offence will appear more than once in the above figures.

Drugs (Hospital Admissions)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many young people under the age of 25 years were admitted to hospital in Scotland suffering from drug-related illnesses or injuries in the first six months of 1985.

Mr. Younger: This information is not available centrally.

Manufacturing Industry (Decline)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the rate of decline in employment in the manufacturing sector in Scotland in the first two quarters of 1985.

Mr. Younger: The number of employees in employment in the manufacturing sector in Scotland is provisionally estimated to have fallen by 0·1 per cent. on a seasonally adjusted basis between December 1984 and June 1985.

Manpower Watch

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library copies of the quarterly joint local authority manpower watch for Scotland from the first count up to the latest.

Mr. Younger: Quarterly figures for local authority manpower have been published jointly by the Scottish Office and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities since 1976 and are available in the Library.

Cash Limits

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to change the cash limits for 1985-86 within his responsibility; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: Yes. The increase of £6,845,000 in the cash limit for class XV, vote 3 (Regional and general industrial support, Scotland) announced by my right hon. Friend, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, on 18 July 1985 at columns *253-54* has been removed. This has been done as a contribution towards the £18,748,000 increase in provision on class XV, vote 5 (Regional Assistance, Scotland) in respect of which my right hon. Friend has today presented a Winter Supplementary Estimate.

£000

Vote	*Current Cash Limit*	*Reduction*	*Revised Limit*
XV, 3 Regional and General Industrial Support, Scotland	138,447	6,845	131,602

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Officers and Staff (Negative Vetting)

Mr. Bermingham asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, how many of the officers and staff of the House have been negatively vetted; and what is the number vetted in each grade of employment.

Mr. Beith: It is not the practice to give detailed information about security matters.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the value added tax classification for human pituitary, thymus, liver and spleen as supplied to the cosmetics and chemical industries.

Mr. Gow: Human organs or tissue for diagnostic or therapeutic purposes or for medical research are exempt from value added tax. Other supplies of such material are taxable at the standard rate.

Demand

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the level of real demand in the economy each year since 1960; and what was the growth rate in each of those years.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Export Bank

Mr. Dover asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what conclusions he has come to following his consultations about the possible requirement for an export bank; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Yes. After extensive consultations with United Kingdom exporters and financial institutions a group of officials from the Treasury, DTI, ECGD and the Bank of England concluded that there was currently little support for the development of a private sector export bank and that such an institution seemed likely to require Government assistance and support in its early stages, thus involving a privileged position which would have been difficult to justify. Ministers have endorsed these conclusions.

The discussions served to demonstrate a widespread appreciation of the potential advantages to both exporters and the Exchequer from encouraging greater use of the capital markets for export finance. To encourage the use of the bond market for export finance the Government have already announced, at column *242* on 21 December 1983, that ECGD would be permitted to guarantee bonds denominated in sterling or foreign currency where this enabled exporters to offer competitive financing packages without subsidy. We are now prepared to extend this to bonds and other capital market instruments where ECGD provides interest rate support, subject still to Treasury and Bank of England consent in individual cases. Discussions with the banks on the use of this mechanism have already begun and ECGD will be seeking to identify appropriate cases in a systematic fashion.

In parallel with this, officials will be discussing with the banks, as part of the periodic review of the structure and level of remuneration available to them under ECGD's fixed rate export finance schemes, modifications to reflect developments in financial markets and new financial instruments. It remains the Government's aim to ensure that export finance is readily available to exporters in the most suitable and cost-effective form so as to enable them to compete effectively in overseas markets.

Oil and Gas Revenues

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing actuals and forecasts, as appropriate, for the years 1973-74 to 1993-94, for *(a)* North sea oil and gas revenues at the same level of detail as in table 12 of the 1985 Brown Book and *(b)* proceeds of the gas levy.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Asset Sales

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table comparable with Cmnd. 9428-II, showing, by programme for the years 1984-85 to 1987-88 the actual and projected proceeds of sales of land and buildings which are outside the special sales of assets programme and which are ruled off against programme totals;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, by programme for the years 1979-80 to 1987-88, the actual and projected proceeds of public sector sales of assets outside the special sales of assets programme, but excluding sales of land and buildings;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the assumed level of proceeds in 1985-86 to 1987-88 from asset sales retained in nationalised businesses in the Cmnd. 9428-II, table 2.2 figures, in a form consistent with the form of the Chief Secretary's reply on 26 July, *Official Report*, columns *861-2*.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* updated plans for special sales of assets in 1985-86 to 1986-87 in a form consistent with the entry in table 2.2 of Cmnd. 9428-II.

Mr. Moore: Updated figures for special sales of assets in 1985-86 and 1986-87 will be published in the "Autumn Statement".

TRANSPORT

Testing Stations

10. **Sir Fergus Montgomery** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what response he has received to his draft conditions for authorisation of Ministry of Transport testing stations, issued in May 1985.

Mrs. Chalker: I recognise that the revised conditions published last May would have caused major difficulties for some existing testers. My right hon. Friend and I therefore announced new conditions on October 4, which I am confident will largely cut out the need for costly alterations to test bays and buildings for existing businesses. This has been widely welcomed.

London-Weymouth Line

11. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make a decision on British Rail's submission for new rolling stock and other improvements on the London-Weymouth line.

Mr. David Mitchell: I hope to reach a decision shortly.

British Airlines

12. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is satisfied with the safety standards of British airlines.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The function of ensuring the safety of air navigation and aircraft is placed by statute on the CAA. I am satisfied that the CAA is carrying out its statutory responsibilities.

Channel Fixed Link

13. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many proposals he has received for Channel fixed links; and if he will make a statement.

37. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Channel tunnel project.

27. **Mr. Hind** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many submissions he has received from promoters of a fixed Channel link.

46. **Mr. Anderson** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement on the Channel fixed link.

Mr. Ridley: I received nine proposals. Four of these were submitted in conformity with the procedures laid down in the "Invitation to Promoters". They are Expressway, the Channel Tunnel Group, Eurobridge and EuroRoute. These four proposals are now being assessed and I will make a statement when consideration of them is complete.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Government's intentions regarding the infrastructural costs connected with different proposals received in connection with the fixed Channel link.

Mr. David Mitchell: The four proposals which were submitted in conformity with the procedures laid down in the "Invitation to Promoters" of a Channel fixed link are now being assessed. I will make a statement covering the matters referred to by my hon. Friend when our consideration of the proposals is complete.

Mr. Dover asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to the Channel link project to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will seek to ensure that all competitors for the Channel fixed link contract will be permitted to hold exhibitions within the precincts of the Palace of Westminster if they apply to do so.

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to the Sea Containers Limited proposals for a fixed link Channel crossing to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am happy that exhibitions of all the qualifying Channel fixed link proposals be held in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Goods (Rail Carriage)

14. **Mr. Donald Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he plans to encourage the diversion of the carriage of goods from roads to rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is for consignors of freight to decide which mode of transport best meets their needs.

Severn Bridge

15. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on repair work on the Severn bridge; what is the cost of work completed; and what is the current estimate of the total cost of the repair.

Mrs. Chalker: Work is in progress to provide improved access into the structure in preparation for the main strengthening. Tenders have been received for strengthening the Aust viaduct, and the contract will be let shortly. Design for the strengthening of Severn and Wye bridges and viaducts is well advanced and tenders will be invited in the next few months.

The cost of strengthening works completed up to the end of October 1985 is about £1 million; this is in addition to the cost of routine maintenance and inspection. The present estimate of the total cost of strengthening and resurfacing the crossing is about £36 million at current prices.

Roads (Greater London)

16. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the consultants' reports which he commissioned on improvements to major roads in the Greater London area.

Mrs. Chalker: I have commissioned no reports on improvements to major roads. My right hon. Friend has commissioned assessment studies into the traffic-related issues in four areas of London. Lack of co-operation from the GLC is delaying the first-stage reports on the identification of problems, which are not now expected until 1986.

National Bus Company

17. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what priority he will give when privatising the subsidiaries of the National Bus Company to proposals for internal buyouts by management and work force.

Mr. Ridley: The Transport Act 1985 requires the National Bus Company to give employees a reasonable opportunity to acquire a controlling interest in the undertaking in which they work. I hope NBC's employees will take up this opportunity.

Driving Tests

18. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on current average waiting times for driving tests.

Mrs. Chalker: The current average wait for an L test in Great Britain is 18½ weeks. In Scotland the figure is 19 weeks. This is chiefly the result of higher than forecast demand and the loss of tests last winter which markedly reduced the benefit from the substantial recruitment of examiners since 1984. Even so waiting periods in many places, including northern Scotland, are now coming down. But this is not enough. My Department is therefore further accelerating recruitment and training procedures for new examiners so far as possible and acting to maximise productivity in order to bring about a General sustained reduction in waiting periods. I am monitoring progress closely.

Perry Oaks Sludge Works

19. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he can report on negotiations concerning the relocation of the Perry Oaks sludge works at Heathrow.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The British Airports Authority, in conjunction with the Thames water authority, has commissioned a study of the options for removing the Perry Oaks sludge works from the current site. The study is now under way; the consultant's report is expected in spring next year.

M25 (Hertfordshire)

20. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will report progress on the construction of the M25 motorway between the A1 and A41 in Hertfordshire.

Mrs. Chalker: The four major contracts which make up this section are due for completion next autumn. The contractors are making good progress.

Taxicard Scheme (London)

21. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide the necessary funds to maintain the London-wide taxicard scheme following abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. The GLC's taxicard scheme is arranged under the concessionary travel powers provided in the London Regional Transport Act 1984. Travel concessions are the responsibility of the local authorities and I understand the London boroughs are giving the matter careful consideration.

British Rail (Locomotives and Rolling Stock)

22. **Mr. Snape** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the purchasing policy of the British Railways Board in connection with the acquisition of new locomotives and rolling stock.

Mr. David Mitchell: The chairman and I discuss a range of issues when we meet, including, when appropriate, the board's general purchasing policy.

Midland Links Motorway

23. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on proposals for a northern relief route for the midland links motorway.

Mrs. Chalker: There is an urgent need to relieve the overcrowded M6 where it runs through the west midlands conurbation. Last year we consulted the public on a number of alternative routes for a high standard relief road around the north of the conurbation. All the routes would provide a good return on the investment. We received a wide variety of views as to the best route. The issues on such a major scheme are complex and selecting a preferred route is taking longer than expected but I am hopeful that we shall be able to make an announcement on this very important scheme fairly soon.

Regional Airports

24. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much investment has taken place at regional airports since 1979; and how much in the period 1974 to 1979.

Mr. Ridley: Investment at regional airports in Great Britain owned by local authorities totalled some £30 million in the six years ending 31 March 1980 and some £189 million in the five years ending 31 March 1985.

Drivers (Alcohol Limit)

25. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has plans to seek to reduce the legal limit of alcohol permissible in the blood of car drivers.

Mrs. Chalker: We have no plans to do so.

Motorways (Safety)

26. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proposed changes are envisaged to make motorways safer; and if he will make a statement.

50. **Sir Dudley Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for improving the safety of motorways.

54. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he intends to put forward with the aims of reducing motorway accidents; and if he will make a statement.

56. **Mr. Sheerman** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has reached any conclusions on ways of improving motorway safety in the short term.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friends and the hon. Gentlemen to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) earlier today.

Concessionary Fares

28. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to monitor the effect of the Transport Act 1985 on concessionary fares.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent his Department plans to monitor the consistency and effectiveness of the use by local authorities of the powers granted to them by the Transport Act 1985 to establish concessionary travel schemes for the disabled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department intends to undertake extensive monitoring of all aspects of the implementation of the Transport Act, including concessionary fares.

British Railways Board

29. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will include in the British Railways Board British Rail workers' elected representatives in the near future.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have no plans to do so. Members of the board are appointed on the basis of the personal contribution which they are likely to make to the board.

Manchester International Airport

30. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his plans for the future of Manchester international airport.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Greater Manchester districts' co-ordinating committee has recently submitted proposals for the establishment of a company to operate the airport. I am considering these. But we will be aiming to ensure that airport companies should not inhibit the introduction of private capital and should be run by local authority owners at arm's length.

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

31. **Mr. Robert Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the future work load of British Rail Engineering Ltd.

Mr. Ridley: The future work load of British Rail Engineering Limited is primarily a matter for BR and BREL, although I am always ready to discuss any particular points should the BR chairman wish to raise them with me.

55. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the subject of measures by British Rail to safeguard employment at BREL.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. That is a matter of management for the BREL and BR boards.

58. **Mr. Martin** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will discuss the position at BREL, Springburn.

Mr. David Mitchell: I would be ready to do so if there is a particular issue relating to BREL Springburn which the British Rail chairman wishes to raise with me.

A127 (Accident Statistics)

32. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many fatal or serious injury accidents have occurred on the A127 in Essex in the last full year for which records are available; and how this compares with the previous five years.

Mrs. Chalker: The number of fatal and serious accidents on the A127 in Essex in the last five years are set out in the table.

Fatal serious and slight accidents: A127 in Essex: 1980-84

Year	*Fatal*	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*
1980	6	53	134	193
1981	9	60	152	221
1982	5	40	154	199
1983	7	48	166	221
1984	5	49	177	231

Motorways (Contraflow Systems)

33. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce a no overtaking rule for heavy goods vehicles whilst traversing a motorway contraflow system.

Mrs. Chalker: I am keeping all aspects of motorway contraflow systems under continual review and at present the evidence suggests that there is not a general case to ban lane changing.

Roads Programme

34. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much was spent on road construction last year; how this compares in real terms with spending in 1978-79; and how much it is anticipated will be spent on road construction this year.

Mrs. Chalker: Expenditure on national road construction last year was £569 million, which represents a 21 per cent. increase in real terms over 1978-79. Expenditure on local road construction was £479 million, a 24 per cent. increase, in real terms, over 1978-79. We are planning to spend some £598 million on national road construction and £502 million on local road construction this year.

Transport and Travel Consultancies

35. **Mr. Rathbone** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what use his Department is making of independent transport and travel consultancies.

Mr. Ridley: My Department employs management, computer and advertising consultants and also uses consultants in a number of specific areas such as the design and construction of roads, public transport and research. We also have financial consultants for privatisation schemes. If my hon. Friend has any particular area of interest, I would be glad to provide more detailed information.

Roundabouts (Priority)

36. **Sir Anthony Meyer** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now introduce a uniform system of priority from the right at all roundabouts.

Mrs. Chalker: The vast majority of roundabouts are subject to the "give way from the right" rule as set out in rule 102 of the Highway Code. There are a few exceptions but these are signed accordingly. If the hon. Member has a particular problem in mind, perhaps he will write to me.

A629-A650 (Airedale Route)

38. **Mr. Waller** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make a further announcement about the construction of the A629/A650 Airedale route.

Mrs. Chalker: I hope to make an announcement during the next month or so about the orders for the Kildwich to Beechcliffe section. An announcement about the Victoria park to Crossflatts section should follow about a month later. I will write to my hon. Friend when decisions have been made.

Lorries (City of London)

40. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further steps he proposes to take in relation to the GLC ban on lorries in the City of London during certain hours.

Mr. Ridley: In its judgment given on 29 October, the Court of Appeal ruled that the construction to be put on the reserve powers in schedule 9 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 was such that I did not have power to prohibit the GLC from proceeding with its night-time

and weekend lorry ban without first holding a public inquiry. Its interpretation showed the extent of my powers to be narrower than I had believed them to be.

After careful consideration, I have decided not to seek leave to appeal to the House of Lords.

I understand that the GLC is pressing ahead with its arrangements to introduce and administer the ban from 16 December.

From 1 April 1986, the Common Council and other London borough councils will each become responsible for the ban in respect of its own areas, and for deciding what arrangements to make for its administration in its area.

Shipping Policy

41. **Mr. Moynihan** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet his colleagues in the EEC Council of Ministers to discuss Community shipping policy.

Mr. Ridley: This coming Thursday, when shipping is to be discussed at a meeting of the Transport Council.

British Airways

42. **Mr. Dicks** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Airways to discuss privatisation.

Mr. Ridley: On 6 November.

British Rail (Investment)

43. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what value of British Rail investment projects he has approved since May 1983.

Mr. David Mitchell: Nearly £750 million, at cash prices, involving 17 different schemes.

Tachographs

44. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is satisfied with the arrangements for the operation of tachographs in coaches.

Mr. David Mitchell: The operation of tachographs in coaches is subject to the requirements of EEC Regulation 1463/70. I am at present discussing possible amendments to that regulation with our partners in Europe with a view to securing improvements.

British Airports Authority

45. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to introduce legislation to enable the sale to the private sector of the British Airports Authority.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend intends to introduce the necessary legislation as soon as possible.

Dial-a-ride (London)

47. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the present position as to future funding of the London-based dial-a-ride service for elderly and disabled people.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East, (Mr. Dykes).

Air Services (Europe)

48. **Mr. Portillo** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has made any further progress towards agreeing more liberal arrangements for air services to Europe since June 1985.

49. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made to date in concluding more competitive air service agreements with other European countries.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Last month I met the Belgian Minister of Communications to sign new liberal air services arrangements between the United Kingdom and Belgium. This follows on the arrangements already agreed with the Netherlands, the Federal Republic of Germany and Luxembourg. We have also recently secured some flexibility on capacity with France, paving the way for greater changes. My right hon. Friend and I continue to press for liberalisation within the EC and in discussion with other countries including Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Finland and the Scandinavian countries.

BR (Track Maintenance)

51. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to discuss with the chairman of British Rail the question of arrears in track maintenance.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. That is a management matter for the British Railways Board.

London Airports

52. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has yet received a report from the Civil Aviation Authority on the distribution of traffic among London airports.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. I expect the Civil Aviation Authority to report by spring 1986. The authority has just published a consultation document, "Air Traffic Distribution in the London Area", a copy of which I placed in the Library on 8 November.

Docklands Light Railway

53. **Mr. Richard Page** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has discussed with the chairman of London Regional Transport a possible extension of the Docklands light railway to Bank.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that London Regional Transport is currently examining proposals for a privately financed extension of the Docklands light railway westwards to Bank. We have not as yet discussed them with Dr. Bright.

M1 (Traffic Flows)

57. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Secretary of State for Transport by how much he anticipates that traffic flows on the M1 will be reduced when the M40 is completed; and what is the anticipated date of completion.

Mrs. Chalker: Our assessments indicate that once the M40 extension, from Waterstock to join the M42 at Umberslade, south of Birmingham, is complete,

somewhere in the range of 16,000 to 20,000 vehicles per day will transfer to the new road from the M1. Any periods of traffic restrictions on M1 could increase this figure substantially.

On present programming, but of course subject to the outcome of the current litigation and the completion of the remaining statutory procedures, this road could be open to traffic in the early 1990s.

Brampton Bypass

59. **Mr. Maclean** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the preferred route for the Brampton by pass.

Mrs. Chalker: I expect to announce the route, on which Highways Act orders will be based, during the next few weeks.

M25 (Repair Costs)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether the cost of repairing the cracks in the Reigate to Leatherhead section of the M25 will be paid for from public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) on 23 October, under the provisions of the contract, it is for the Department's consulting engineers, W. S. Atkins and Partners, which is the engineer for the contract, to determine where the responsibility lies. That determination will be binding unless referred to arbitration by the Department or the contractor.

I have no contractual powers to impose a timetable on the engineer to produce his determination, although I have explained I would like it to be dealt with expeditiously. This is, however, a complex technical matter which requires thorough investigation and careful consideration.

I will inform the hon. Member of the engineer's determination when it is issued.

British Rail (Electrification)

Viscount Cranborne asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his decision over British Rail's submission for the electrification of the Bournemouth to Weymouth railway line.

Mr. David Mitchell: I hope to reach a decision fairly shortly.

Lorry Ban (London)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the estimated impact of the Greater London council lorry ban on transport operators who have traditionally delivered their loads into the city from rural areas of Scotland.

Mrs. Chalker: I cannot but be anxious about the potential effects of the GLC lorry ban and I will keep a close watch on developments. The impact will largely depend on the detailed administration of the ban, particularly the exemption permit system, by the GLC and individual boroughs in their areas, after abolition of the GLC, on 1 April 1986.

Amey Roadstone

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to Amey Roadstone and its subsidiaries in excess of £100,000 over the last two financial years.

Mrs. Chalker: During the last two financial years contracts over £100,000 have been awarded to Amey Roadstone:

Scheme Title		Value (£ million)	Date awarded
M4	Resurfacing junctions 18 and 17, Wilts	0·2	18 April 1983
A40	Overlay from Sandhills-Holton, Oxon	0·5	27 April 1983
M1	Strengthening of carriageways and hardshoulders in Bedfordshire	2·7	1 July 1983
A38	Strengthening Voss farm and Lee hill, Devon	0·6	2 September 1983
M4	Reconstruction junctions 17 and 16, Wiltshire	1·5	5 April 1984
M1	Strengthening of carriageways in Bedfordshire	1·7	15 May 1984
M5	Resurfacing, and repairs to expansion joints, Oldbury viaduct, West Midlands	0·1	24 May 1984
A38	Major strengthening, Burton-on-Trent bypass, stage 3, Staffordshire	0·9	4 June 1984
A17	Remedial works, Heckington bypass, Lincolnshire	1·0	26 June 1984
M1	Reconstruction junctions 14 and 15, Buckinghamshire	1·5	3 August 1984
M5	Widening and reconstruction Warndon-Catshill advance works, Hereford and Worcestershire	3·2	14 September 1984
A303	Major maintenance, Mere bypass, Wiltshire	0·2	1 November 1984
A419	Resurfacing at Stratton St. Margaret bypass, Wiltshire	0·4	20 November 1984
M4	Overlay junctions 18 and 19, Avon	0·3	25 February 1985
M5	Resurfacing junctions 3-4, Hereford and Worcestershire	1·0	22 March 1985
M5	Resurfacing junctions 12-14, Gloucestershire	2·1	25 March 1985

A38 (Crash Barriers)

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about what progress has been made with regard to the installation of crash barriers on the A38 sections between Plympton and Bittaford and between Syon Abbey and Dean Prior; if specifications have been drawn up; if tenders have been invited; if contracts have been exchanged; and if he will give a timetable for the proposed installations.

Mrs. Chalker: I am glad to say that all the preparatory works have been completed and the contract awarded. Installation work is due to start today and be completed by next March.

Motorways (Contraflow Systems)

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the procedure to be adopted when a motorway contraflow system is removed, including recommended time of day and instructions given to police and contractors to ensure that normal traffic flow is unimpeded; and whether this procedure was carried out on Monday 4 November between the hours of 6 am and 9 am on the southbound carriageway of junction 14 of the M1.

Mrs. Chalker: Detailed guidance on the removal of motorway contraflow systems is set out in notes for guidance relating to the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 as affecting personnel working on motorways and trunk roads, produced jointly by my Department and the County Surveyors' Society. A copy of the latest edition of these notes, published in August this year, is in the Library. In the case quoted by my hon. Friend, the contract specified the permitted times of day for removing the contra-flow in order to minimise delays to traffic. On the morning of 4 November, the contraflow should have been cleared by 6 am, but took longer than anticipated.

M1/M25

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is satisfied with the present arrangement for traffic travelling south on the M1 to exit at junction 6 in order to gain access to the M25 west.

Mrs. Chalker: Some congestion is occurring at the junction because of the difficulty of joining the A405 westbound, which is heavily loaded. Traffic signals have been installed on the A405 and we shall shortly be erecting warning signs on the M1. We are also considering the scope for other measures. When M25 is open, traffic wishing to travel westbound on M25 will have direct access from the M1 at junction 6A, but after a period of monitoring we shall consider whether more permanent alterations are necessary at junction 6.

Traffic and Transportation Engineers

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many additional traffic and transportation engineers his Department is intending to recruit to its London office by 1 April 1986; and on what aspects of transportation within London they will be engaged.

Mrs. Chalker: The Civil Service Commission has recently concluded a recruitment competition for a number of grade I and II civil engineers for my Department. They were all required to fill vacancies caused by internal promotions and natural wastage.

Five grade I recruits from this competition are being offered posts in our London regional office and will fill vacancies of a general engineering nature early in the new year.

The recruitment of professional engineers for my Department is a continuing process against the background of regular reviews of the Department's needs.

M66

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the date for the public inquiry for the proposed M66 motorway, Denton to Middleton section.

Mrs. Chalker: I expect to announce a date in the spring of 1986 within the next few weeks.

British Rail (Privatisation)

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to encourage the privatisation of the catering facilities of British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have asked the British Rail chairman to obtain more supply and support services from the private sector, including rail and station catering.

Woolwich Ferry

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements have been proposed by London boroughs relating to the future operation of the Woolwich ferry.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall write to the hon. Member shortly.

Thames Bridges and Rotherhithe Tunnel

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what arrangements have been proposed by London boroughs relating to responsibilities for the Thames bridges after 31 March 1986;

(2) what arrangements have been proposed by London boroughs relating to responsibility for the Rotherhithe tunnel after 31 March 1986.

Mrs. Chalker: The Advice Note LGA (L) DTp3, sent to London boroughs on 24 July, proposed that the borough of Tower Hamlets should be responsible for the Rotherhithe tunnel, and the following boroughs should be responsible for the Thames bridges:

Bridge	*Responsibility Post Abolition*
Hampton Court	Richmond
Kingston	Kingston
Richmond	Richmond
Twickenham	Department of Transport
Kew	Department of Transport
Chiswick	Department of Transport
Hammersmith	Hammersmith and Fulham
Putney	Wandsworth
Wandsworth	Wandsworth
Battersea	Wandsworth
Albert	Kensington and Chelsea
Chelsea	Kensington and Chelsea
Vauxhall	Lambeth
Lambeth	Lambeth
Westminster	City of Westminster
Waterloo	City of Westminster
Blackfriars	City of London
Southwark	City of London
London	City of London
Tower	City of London

Blackwall Tunnel

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements have been proposed by London boroughs relating to responsibility for the Blackwall tunnel after 31 March 1986.

Mrs. Chalker: None. I propose to trunk the Blackwall tunnel.

Urban Traffic Control (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the proposals received from authorities for future urban traffic control arrangements in London.

Mrs. Chalker: I have not yet received any proposals from local authorities for urban traffic control arrangements in London.

Metropolitan Roads

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the Metropolitan Roads Trunking Order 1985 will be *(a)* made and *(b)* laid before Parliament.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall make an order trunking some of the metropolitan roads when I have considered the views of London boroughs.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the responses received on his Department's proposals for the trunking of metropolitan roads under section 4 of the Local Government Act 1985.

Mrs. Chalker: No.

Bus Services (Leicestershire)

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on the effects of deregulation in the transport industry on bus services in Leicestershire.

Mr. David Mitchell: Competition will benefit bus passengers in Leicestershire as it will elsewhere. The Transport Act will give bus operators the incentive and the opportunity to attract people back onto buses to the benefit of customer ratepayer and operator.

North Devon Link Road Inquiry

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will announce his decision on stage 2A and 2B of the north Devon link road inquiry; and if he will make a statement on the timetable for the road programme in north Devon.

Mrs. Chalker: I will announce the decisions on these remaining sections of the north Devon link road as soon as I have reached conclusions on all the outstanding issues. I hope that for stage 2A this will be before the Christmas recess. As we have only recently received the inquiry inspector's report on stage 2B, I am unable to say when I might be able to announce the decision on this scheme.

The road programme in north Devon, for which I am responsible, centres on the new north Devon link road along with bypasses of Bideford and Barnstaple. Stage 1 of the link road is open to traffic, and I have already stated the position on the remaining two sections. The Bideford bypass is under construction and Barnstable bypass is a further scheme where, in accordance with the statutory procedures, I am considering the report of the inquiry inspector.

Public Transport (West Yorkshire)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has had on the co-ordination of public transport in west Yorkshire.

Mr. David Mitchell: No recent representations have been made to me specifically on this issue.

Pilotage

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Transport what response he has received on his Green Paper on the reform of the pilotage services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Over 300 organisations and individuals have commented on the Green Paper. The proposal to transfer pilotage responsibilities to the harbour authorities has been welcomed by most of the parties interested in pilotage, although many pilots have expressed reservations or opposition. The Select Committee on Transport, in its report on pilotage issued in August, have also endorsed the broad thrust of the Green Paper. I intend now to seek an opportunity to introduce legislation as soon as the Parliamentary programme permits, and will make a further statement, once I have completed consideration of all the comments that have been made.

Hire Cars (London)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to start his proposed investigation into the possible licensing of private hire cars in Greater London; and what opportunities will be given to representatives of the private hire car operators to give evidence.

Mr. David Mitchell: When work on the implementation of the Transport Act 1985 has been completed—probably in the late summer or early autumn of next year—I shall be reviewing the whole of taxi and hire-car legislation in England and Wales. Whether hire cars in London should be subjected to licensing and if so what form that licensing should take will be considered as part of that review. All interested parties will be fully consulted.

Aircraft Safety

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received advocating an increase to 33 inches in the minimum seat pitch of seats in aircraft using British airports.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have received a number of letters from members of the public on this and similar subjects. I refer all representations on safety issues affecting United Kingdom registered aircraft to the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority, which is solely responsible for aviation safety matters. Aircraft registered in another state are the responsibility of that state.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what changes to safety procedures and regulations he proposes in the light of the recent Manchester airport disaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority, which is solely responsible for aviation safety matters, will decide if any regulatory changes are required in the light of the Manchester accident as the evidence becomes available.

Dartford Tunnel

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received advocating a third crossing at the Dartford tunnel on the M25; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Since I announced in June the outcome of our consultants' traffic study, representations have been received from four Members of Parliament, the Leader of Kent county council, the tunnel manager, and chairman of Movement for London, and nine members of the public.

I explained in the adjournment debate on 21 October that we accept that there is a strong case on traffic grounds for additional capacity at Dartford, and that no time should be lost inproviding a third crossing. To that end we are considering on what basis the private sector could be invited to submit proposals for provision of an alternative.

Cash Limits

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Transport what changes he proposes to make to the cash limit on class VI, Vote 5.

Mr. Ridley: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class VI, Vote 5 will be increased by £749,000 from a token provision of £1,000 to £750,000 to meet costs arising from preliminary work on the sale of shares in British Airways. The increase will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planning total of public expenditure. These costs were to have been offset against the proceeds of the sale of shares this year, but it is now not expected that the sale will take place until early in 1986-87.

DEFENCE

Lieutenant-Colonel Boyle

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether, following the acquittal of the service men of 9 Signals Regiment, Lieutenant-Colonel Boyle will be returned to the United States to continue his astronaut training.

Mr. Stanley: No.

United States-United Kingdom Lines of Communication Agreement

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the costs of implementing a United States-United Kingdom lines of communication agreement will fall on the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stanley: No, except for the provision of surplus land and buildings belonging to the Government of the United Kingdom which are provided rent free.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if working parties have been established to develop plans to implement the United States-United Kingdom lines of communication agreement; and how many major plans and subsidiary technical understandings have been agreed to.

Mr. Stanley: Working groups to implement the US-UK lines of communication arrangement have been in existence for many years. Fifteen plans under the arrangement have been agreed to date.

NATO (Logistical Resources)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current North Atlantic Treaty Organisation policy on the provision by member states of logistical resources to its forces in Europe; and when this was last changed.

Mr. Stanley: Logistic support within NATO is a national responsibility. The responsibility for co-ordination rests with the Supreme Allied Commander Europe and with his major subordinate commanders at the appropriate levels. This policy has been in existence since 1952 and remains unchanged.

United States-United Kingdom Logistic Plans

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the requirement for British civilian labour in United States-United Kingdom joint logistic plans.

Mr. Stanley: The requirement for British civilians falls mainly in the areas of transport and casualty handling.

GCHQ, Cheltenham

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the transfer of the joint speech research unit from Government communications headquarters, Cheltenham, to the Royal Signals and Radar Establishment at Malvern.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The joint speech research unit will move from the Government communications headquarters, Cheltenham, to the Royal Signals and Radar Establishment, Malvern, over the winter of 1985-86 with 1 November 1985 as the formal date of transfer. The JSRU conducts research into automatic speech recognition and synthesis. Its further role has been under consideration for some time and the merging of the unit with RSRE activities on automatic speech recognition, and related work such as image processing and general signal processing, will be the most beneficial arrangement for the long term progress of the work.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if staff transferred from Government communications headquarters, Cheltenham, to the Royal Signals and Radar Establishment at Malvern will be permitted to join a trade union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Staff transferred from the Government communications headquarters, Cheltenham, to the Royal Signals and Radar Establishment, Malvern, as a result of the move of the joint speech research unit will be eligible, like other RSRE staff, to join a trades union.

Rosyth Dockyard

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the Health and Safety Executive's report identifying irregularities in the organisation of work involving asbestos substances on Her Majesty's dockyard and naval base, Rosyth.

Mr. Norman Lamont: On 19 September 1985 a factory inspector from the Health and Safety Executive visited Rosyth naval base and made a number of observations about arrangements in the lagging shop hygiene facility which apparently did not meet the

standards laid down. Where necessary, work was immediately stopped in the affected areas. The facility has not been used since that time and alternative decontamination facilities have now been set up. The inspector reported more fully in writing on 24 October. This report also covered other areas of the base where asbestos had been handled. All the points covered by this report have either been dealt with or are the subject of discussions between the Health and Safety Executive and my Department as to how they can best be handled.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to inform the Health and Safety Executive in future when work involving asbestos substances is being carried out in Her Majesty's dockyard and naval base, Rosyth.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government regard matters concerning the health and safety of its employees as being of the utmost importance. Although there is no statutory requirement to inform the Health and Safety Executive when work involving asbestos substances is being carried out, it is my Department's policy to co-operate as fully as possible with the HSE in all such matters and officials at the naval base are discussing this with the executive.

Defence Jobs

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide a breakdown of defence jobs in Britain by each standard region and for Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Details of the regional distribution of United Kingdom Service personnel and MOD civilian staff are published in volume 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985." Estimates of the number of jobs in United Kingdom industry sustained by defence expenditure are derived from generalised statistical information. It is not possible to break these latter estimates down into numbers employed in particular regions.

Cash Limits

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Secretary of State for Defence what changes he proposes to make to current cash limits for 1985-86.

Mr. Stanley: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Winter Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class I vote 1 is reduced by £100,000 from £6,644,842,000 to £6,644,742,000, and the cash limit for a new vote class I vote 6 will be set at £100,000. Vote 6 will provide for necessary preliminary expenditure in connection with the movement to the private sector of Royal Ordnance plc which, as my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement said in answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) on 22 October 1985 at column *141*, it is hoped could take place in 1986. No net change in public expenditure is involved.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Laryngectomy Speech Aids

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services under what circumstances laryngectomy speech aids are given to patients via the National Health Service.

Mr. Whitney: Speech aids are given to those patients who do not develop oesophageal speech after surgery, or who also require an "interim" solution. Where such speech aids are needed they are normally prescribed on the National Health Service by the hospital consultant concerned, although the decision as to type of aid may sometimes be left to the speech therapist. Provision of the aid, like any other item of NHS expenditure, is dependent on the ability of individual health authorities to meet the cost and this can cause delay in provision.

Consultants

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total number of new consultant posts created in the National Health Service since 1974; and if he will also give details of the number of consultant posts created for those involved in *(a)* clinical and hospital work and *(b)* community medicine for each year since 1974.

Mr. Hayhoe: Information in the precise form requested is not available. However, over the period 30 September 1974 to 30 September 1984 the number of consultants in post in medical and dental specialties in England and Wales, including equivalent grades in community medicine, increased by 2,840. Details for each year of the period of the number of consultants in post and (where available) of the number of vacant posts, distinguishing between the hospital services and community medicine, are set out in the tables.

Number of Consultant Posts, in the Hospital Service at 30 September each year*
England and Wales

Year	In Post	Vacant Posts†
‡1974	11,627	667
1975	11,946	749
1976	12,345	720
1977	12,487	845
1978	12,766	905
1979	13,028	922
1980	13,284	1,194
1981	13,581	1,096
1982	13,796	1,061
1983	14,124	1,016
1984	14,450	998

* Including hospital medical and dental consultants and senior hospital medical officers and senior hospital dental officers with allowances.

† Due to the change in definition of vacant posts in 1980 figures for 1979 and earlier years are not strictly comparable.

Number of Consultant-level Community Medicines Posts at 30 September each year England and Wales*

Year	In post	Vacant posts
†1974	531	
1975	612	130
1976	623	123
1977	657	121
1978	648	137
1979	638	139
1980	639	145
1981	637	102
‡1982	553	141
1983	580	140
1984	548	126

* Including regional medical officer, district medical officer, specialist in community medicine and special salary scale staff.

† The NHS re-organisation in 1974 is believed to have caused a

significant under reporting of staff returned by authorities.

‡ In 1982 as a result of restructuring the grades of area medical officer and district community physician were abolished. About 70 doctors who did not take up district medical officer posts took early retirement.

‖ Not available.

Community Care

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total number of nurses involved only in community care for each of the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Hayhoe: The figures are shown in the table:

Primary Health Care Nursing Staff —England*

As at 30 September	*Whole time† equivalent*
1980	33,770
1981	36,280
1982	37,140
1983	37,470
1984	37,460

* Excludes midwifery staff and agency staff. Includes health visitor students and district nurse students.

† Figures are whole time equivalent rounded to nearest 10.

Dental Care

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what has been the number of uncompleted courses of dental treatment as indicated by the Dental Estimates Board in each year since 1965;

(2) what has been the total number of dental treatments as indicated by the Dental Estimates Board in each year since 1965.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Nurses (Accommodation)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* a table for each of the four regional health authorities serving London showing the number of nurses and the hospitals concerned where accommodation is to be withdrawn together with an indication as to whether they have been offered a chance to buy at a discount the property they currently live in or must make alternative arrangements within 12 months.

Mr. Hayhoe: No proposals have yet been received from regional health authorities. Any staff who are no longer to be offered accommodation will either have the chance to buy at a discount the property they currently live in, or be given at least a year to make alternative arrangements.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps social security officers are obliged to take to establish the identity and address of claimants who present themselves for the payment of supplementary benefit.

Mr. Major: Social security officers should be satisfied that details of identity and address provided by claimants in connection with a claim for supplementary benefit are correct. When they consider it necessary officers are able to ask claimants to provide documentary proof.

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what criteria adjudicating officers use in determining whether a person is available for work and therefore eligible for supplementary benefit.

Mr. Major: A claimant for supplementary allowance is required to be available for work (unless he is in a category exempt by regulations from this requirement). In determining availability the adjudication officer takes into consideration whether the claimant is occupied or engaged in any activity which would prevent him from taking employment. In addition the adjudication officer must be satisfied that the claimant is not imposing such restrictions on the nature or other conditions of employment he is prepared to accept, that he has no reasonable prospects of obtaining work. If there is reason to doubt the claimant's availability at any time during the currency of his claim, the adjudication officer may review the case.

Orthopaedic Surgery

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of patients on orthopaedic waiting lists have to wait for over 12 months for the appropriate inpatient surgical treatment in each of the health authorities in England.

Mr. Whitney: The available information is given in the table.

Orthopaedic in-patient waiting lists on 31 March 1985, NHS hospitals, England
Percentage of non-urgent cases on the list for more than one year

Regional and District Health Authority	*Percentage*
Northern RHA	
RHA Total	22·7
Hartlepool	25·4
North Tees	4·2
South Tees	22·3
East Cumbria	26·6
South Cumbria	3·9
West Cumbria	16·4
Darlington	33·6
Durham	12·0
North West Durham	30·0
South West Durham	1·4
Northumberland	15·4
Gateshead	4·7
Newcastle upon Tyne	13·7
North Tyneside	13·2
South Tyneside	23·8
Sunderland	55·4
Yorkshire RHA	
RHA Total	27·7
Hull	31·2
East Yorkshire	15·8
Grimsby	44·7
Scunthorpe	36·7
Northallerton	11·4
York	12·4
Scarborough	27·9
Harrogate	4·0
Bradford	22·7
Airedale	49·0
Calderdale	5·7
Huddersfield	6·0
Dewsbury	26·8
Leeds Western	44·7
Leeds Eastern	36·7
Wakefield	0·0
Pontefract	12·1

Regional and District Health Authority	Percentage
Trent RHA	
RHA Total	43·0
North Derbyshire	36·1
South Derbyshire	18·0
Leicestershire	28·5
North Lincolnshire	30·6
South Lincolnshire	47·0
Bassetlaw	21·2
Central Nottinghamshire	57·2
Nottingham	15·0
Barnsley	0·0
Doncaster	35·7
Rotherham	55·1
Sheffield	56·1
East Anglian RHA	
RHA Total	46·9
Cambridge	60·9
Peterborough	8·7
West Suffolk	24·6
East Suffolk	37·3
Norwich	47·4
Great Yarmouth	40·4
West Norfolk and Wisbech	16·4
Huntingdon	1·2
North West Thames RHA	
RHA Total	25·5
North Bedfordshire	22·0
South Bedfordshire	0·0
North Hertfordshire	40·3
East Hertfordshire	0·0
North West Hertfordshire	13·8
South West Hertfordshire	40·1
Barnet	1·9
Harrow	38·6
Hillingdon	35·6
Hounslow and Spelthorne	52·2
Ealing	57·9
Brent	0·0
Paddington	12·6
Hammersmith and Fulham	39·6
Victoria	10·9
North East Thames RHA	
RHA Total	35·6
Basildon and Thurrock	43·1
Mid Essex	22·8
North East Essex	24·8
West Essex	18·9
Southend	18·4
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	50·3
Hampstead	37·9
Bloomsbury	35·1
Islington	32·3
City and Hackney	52·9
Newham	27·0
Tower Hamlets	58·1
Enfield	18·3
Haringey	9·7
Redbridge	28·3
Waltham Forest	32·2
South East Thames RHA	
RHA Total	37·1
Brighton	40·3
Eastbourne	25·6
Hastings	25·4
South East Kent	37·0
Canterbury and Thanet	31·2
Dartford and Gravesham	6·5
Maidstone	63·9
Medway	38·1
Tunbridge Wells	41·0
Bexley	15·0
Greenwich	25·5
Bromley	39·9
West Lambeth	70·9
Camberwell	30·1
Lewisham and North Southwark	24·7
South West Thames RHA	
RHA Total	27·7
North West Surrey	13·4
West Surrey and North East Hants	49·6
South West Surrey	52·2
Mid Surrey	5·6
East Surrey	0·0
Chichester	36·5
Mid Downs	18·4
Worthing	42·6
Croydon	16·5
Kingston and Esher	33·9
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	20·7
Wandsworth	48·7
Merton and Sutton	0·9
Wessex RHA	
RHA Total	37·5
East Dorset	13·8
West Dorset	19·1
Portsmouth	11·7
South West Hants and Southampton	95·0
Winchester	45·5
Basingstoke	39·5
Salisbury	50·6
Swindon	30·4
West Wiltshire and Bath	41·7
Isle of Wight	7·0
Oxford RHA	
RHA Total	25·7
East Berkshire	2·0
West Berkshire	0·0
Aylesbury	30·0
Wycombe	0·0
Milton Keynes	0·8
Kettering	60·5
Northampton	54·0
Oxfordshire	10·7
South Western RHA	
RHA Total	35·8
Bristol and Weston	42·2
Frenchay	9·5
Southmead	50·0
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	47·9
Exeter	34·4
North Devon	50·0
Plymouth	34·1
Torbay	*
Cheltenham	1·1
Gloucester	22·0
Somerset	26·0
Northern Western RHA	
RHA Total	37·2
Lancaster	23·5
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	18·6
Preston	54·6
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	19·5
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	42·5
West Lancashire	22·0
Chorley and South Ribble	*
Bolton	28·8
Bury	1·1
North Manchester	23·3
Central Manchester	69·5
South Manchester	18·0
Oldham	74·3
Rochdale	30·2
Salford	28·6
Stockport	5·1

Regional and District Health Authority	*Percentage*
Tameside and Glossop	33·1
Trafford	0·0
Wigan	46·7
Special Health Authorities	
SHAs Total	4·6
The Hospital For Sick Children	3·3
National Hospitals For Nervous Diseases	*
Moorfields Eye Hospital	*
Bethlehem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	*
National Heart and Chest Hospitals	*
The Royal Marsden Hospital	*
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	5·8
The Eastman Dental Hospital	*
ENGLAND TOTAL	34·7

* No orthopaedic waiting list

Human Tissue

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will order his officials to investigate alleged breaches of the code of conduct advised in the Peel report 1972 on the use of foetal material; if he will press charges against those in breach of such guidelines under the Human Tissue Act; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will place in the Library all documents and correspondence relating to the investigation in 1983 by officials of his Department into an alleged trade in dead human foetal material;

(3) whether his Department has received any further information regarding a trade in human pituitary glands or foetal material as a result of the trial and coviction of Dr. Mark Patterson for conspiracy to sell blood in July 1984.;

(4) whether he is still satisfied that there is no evidence available to his Department to substantiate allegations of a trade in human foetal material;

(5) what action he has taken after receipt of correspondence from Celaton Laboratory Research dated 6 December 1984 and Jacobson Chemicals Ltd. dated 21 January 1985 to Mr. R. Aitken, offering to supply foetal material for cosmetics, sent by the hon. Member for Belfast, South.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek to give statutory effect to the code of practice recommended in the Peel report 1972 on the use of foetuses and foetal material.

Mr. Hayhoe: We have no plans to do so.

Ethical Committees

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the names and addresses of the secretaries of all local ethical committees in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hayhoe: This information is not availble centrally.

Board and Lodging Allowance

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when, and how, he now proposes to raise the board and lodging limits for elderly persons and others in residential homes and hospitals.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the regulations governing board and lodging allowances in the light of the recent report of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Members to what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services said to the House this afternoon.

NHS (Beds)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the average daily number of available beds in the National Health Service each year since 1960; and what was the percentage change each year.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is given in the table. It should be noted that the number of in-patient cases treated rose from 3,932 thousand in 1960 to 6,178 thousand in 1984 and the number of cases treated per available bed rose from 8·8 to 18·5 over this period.

NHS Hospitals in England

Year	*Average daily number of available beds*	*Percentage change on previous year*
1960	448,343	−0·2
1961	442,343	−1·3
1962	440,316	−0·5
1963	439,176	−0·3
1964	438,404	−0·2
1965	437,408	−0·2
1966	434,846	−0·6
1967	434,378	−0·1
1968	432,140	−0·5
1969	428,737	−0·8
1970	423,621	−1·2
1971	419,612	−0·9
1972	412,664	−1·7
1973	403,526	−2·2
1974	396,235	−1·8
1975	387,632	−2·2
1976	383,132	−1·2
1977	375,926	−1·9
1978	369,235	−1·8
1979	361,670	−2·0
1980	355,978	−1·6
1981	351,669	−1·2
1982	348,104	−1·0
1983	343,091	−1·4
1984	334,513	−2·5

Social Security Reform

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he now expects to implement the Green Paper proposals on social security; how many extra civil servants he estimates will be needed and at what cost; what extra administrative cost he now estimates will be involved regarding local authority requirements; and what he now estimates will be the total annual savings from the package of measures.

Mr. Newton: We are currently considering our final proposals in the light of consultation on those in the Green Paper.

Stanley Royd Hospital (Salmonella)

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the committee of inquiry into the salmonella outbreak at Stanley Royd hospital to report.

Mr. Hayhoe: Very soon.

Hospitals (Wartime Measures)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information is given to his Department's civil defence planners about the consequences for managing hospitals in times of war of the requirements of the joint United Kingdom/United States logistic plan for hospitals to give priority to United States military casualties;

(2) how many hospitals will be required to discharge their patients in order to receive United States military casualties if the current United States/United Kingdom lines of communication agreement is implemented in wartime.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Liverpool (Benefit Payments)

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what contingency plans, in terms of additional staff and facilities, his Department has made to guarantee the expeditious payment of benefits should Liverpool city council's 31,000 work force be placed in a situation in which they fail to receive wages owing to them, or they are laid off.

Mr. Newton: The Department has procedures designed to cover any situation where large numbers of people ceased to receive payment of wages or salaries.

Expenditure Statistics

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table on estimated gross current expenditure per head in England for the latest year available, analysed by sex within age groups, comparable with table 3.11.2 of Cmnd. 9428-II.

Mr. Hayhoe: The table gives the requested information by age groups for 1983-84, the latest year for which these estimates are available. The Department does not routinely prepare comparable analyses by sex.

Estimated gross current expenditure per head (England) 1983-84 (£)

	All age groups	*All births*	*0-4*	*5-15*	*16-64*	*65-74*	*75+*
Hospital and community health services	185	1,025	160	75	95	370	875
Family practitioner services	65	70	60	55	55	85	135
Personal social services	55	20	70	75	20	75	330
Total	305	1,115	290	205	170	530	1,340

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on claims made for exceptionally severe weather allowances as a result of the ruling by the social security commissioners on the advice given by the adjudication officer;

(2) if he will make arrangements for new claims for exceptionally severe weather payments to be invited from claimants with fuel bills that were higher than normal in the winter of 1984-85.

Mr. Newton: I understand that the chief adjudication officer expects shortly to issue further guidance to adjudication officers on how to deal with such claims in the light of the Social Security Commissioners' decision, and that this guidance will also deal with the handling of requests for review of adjudication officers' decisions on claims last winter.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Youth Training Programme

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how much money was allocated to the youth training programme in 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 in Northern Ireland;

(2) how much of the total moneys allocated to the youth training programme was spent by each of the Department of Economic Development and the Department of Education in 1983-84 and 1984-85; and what is the estimated breakdown for 1986;

(3) if he will make a statement outlining how much money was sought for youth training schemes in Northern Ireland; how much was received; and how it was allocated and spent in 1983-84 and 1984-85.

Dr. Boyson: The budget for delivery of the youth training programme is based upon a physical plan which relates to demand for training, locality by locality. This plan is costed by the Departments of Economic Development and Education, who share the budget which is specifically allocated to the delivery of the programme. Other budgets in both Departments also bear considerable costs relating to the delivery of youth training within their total provision. The amounts voted specifically by Parliament for delivery of the programme, and the actual expenditure incurred, is as follows, broken down by the main schemes comprising the programme. The estimate for 1985-86 was £32·5 million and likely expenditure of £34·9 million is expected.

£ million

	First year full-time training*	Second year full-time training*	Second year employment with training*	Total
1983-84				
Estimate	22·9	10·7	1·3	34·947
Expenditure	19·9	7·9	0·8	28·696
1984-85				
Estimate	20·9	8·4	2·6	31·964
Expenditure	20·8	7·9	1·5	30·272
1985-86				
Estimate	—	—	—	—
Likely expenditure	—	—	—	—

* Rounded to one decimal place

Library Services

Rev. William McCrea asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultations he now proposes to take concerning the recommendation about the Library and Information Services Council of Northern Ireland in the report on library services in the Province prepared by the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Mr. Scott: The Department of Education for Northern Ireland will be writing to the various library interests in Northern Ireland in the very near future seeking views on the need for a formal advisory body, its membership and terms of reference.

School Governors

Rev. William McCrea asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many school governorship places have been granted to the Democratic Unionist members of Omagh and Strabane district councils in the Western education and library board area; and if he will list the schools concerned.

Mr. Scott: None.

Rev. William McCrea asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many school governorship places have been granted to the Official Unionist members of Omagh and Strabane district councils in the Western education and library board area; and if he will list the schools concerned.

Mr. Scott: The boards of governors of the following schools will each have one such member, chosen by the Western education and library board:

OMAGH DISTRICT COUNCIL:
Deverney Primary School
Omagh High School (Intermediate)
STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL:
Ardstraw Primary School
Artigarvan Primary School
Ballycoman Nursery School
Bready Primary School
Castlederg High School (Intermediate)
Edwards Primary School, Castlederg
Newtownstewart Model Primary School
Strabane High School (Intermediate)

Mr. Fred Crozier

Rev. William McCrea asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster has not received a reply to his representation of 5 June, *Official Report*, column *412*, regarding the case of Mr. Fred Crozier of Cookstown high school.

Mr. Scott: I wrote to the hon. Gentleman on 30 July 1985.

Cash Limits

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the cash limits for the Northern Ireland Office and for Northern Ireland departmental services for 1985-86.

Mr. Tom King: Subject to parliamentary approval to the necessary Supplementary Estimates the cash limit for the Northern Ireland Office—class XVII, vote 1—for 1985-86 is being increased by £9,080,000 from £425,602,000 to £434,682,000 to cover increased requirements for expenditure on law, order, protective and miscellaneous services. The increase is mainly due to a higher number and value of claims for compensation for criminal injury and damage and unavoidable increases, including higher than estimated overtime working, in the costs of meeting agreed manpower levels for the police and prison services. Supplementary provision to cover the carry-forward allowed under the end-year flexibility scheme is not being sought by the N10 and the cash limit is being adjusted accordingly. This increase is being fully offset by a decrease in the cash limit for Northern Ireland departmental services and does not therefore add to the total of public expenditure.

The cash limit for Northern Ireland departmental services for 1985-86 has been reduced by £1·3 million from £2,190·5 million to £2,189·2 million. This comprises the reduction of £9·1 million to offset the increase in class XVII, vote 1 referred to above, and two additions: £3·9 million has been added in respect of a final assessment of the net changes to the Northern Ireland programme to reflect changes in comparable programmes in England made in the 1984 "Public Expenditure Survey"; and some £3·8 million has been added following the expansion of the community programme announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget speech on 19 March. The net increase arising from these two cash limit changes is £7·75 million this is being charged to the reserve and does not therefore add to the total of public expenditure.

Quarterly Joint Manpower Watch

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library copies of the quarterly joint manpower watch for Northern Ireland from the first count to the latest.

Mr. Needham: The joint manpower watch scheme does not apply to Northern Ireland. The latest manpower figures for local authorities in Northern Ireland give a total of 10,651 at 30 June 1985.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 12 November 1985

PRIME MINISTER

9 Signal Regiment (Security)

Mr. Kinnock asked the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement about the Security Commission's inquiry into security at 9 Signal Regiment.

The Prime Minister: In answering questions on 29 October at column 812, I told the House that following the acquittal of eight members of 9 Signal Regiment charged with offences under the Official Secrets Acts, I would be considering further, in consultation with the chairman of the Security Commission, whether there should be some further inquiry by the commission into the arrangements for protecting security at the station in question.

I have concluded, and the chairman of the commission agrees, that there is a need for further inquiry into the general level of security at that and other similar stations. I have accordingly invited the commission:

"To consider the measures already in hand for improving security arrangements at 9 Signal Regiment and the other static communications units of all 3 Services, and to advise whether these are adequate or whether any further changes are necessary or desirable."

I will report the commission's findings to the House in due course, so far as I can do so without prejudice to national security.

Scotland

Q8. **Mr. Craigen** asked the Prime Minister when she next plans to visit Scotland.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Norwich

Q24. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Prime Minister whether she has any plans to pay an official visit to Norwich.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

GCHQ, Cheltenham

Q25. **Mr. Beith** asked the Prime Minister whether she will institute an inquiry into the breaches of security at Government communications headquarters alleged by Mr. Jock Kane in extracts from his book published recently in the *Washington Post*.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Kane's allegations about security weaknesses have been aired previously in this country and in the United States. They were the subject of extremely thorough investigations by the security service and Sir James Waddell, a senior retired Home Office official. As I told the House on 20 May 1980, at column 248, and on 12 June 1980, at column 271, most of these allegations had no substance, but those which did require action had received it. There is nothing new in these latest reports, and I see no need for a further inquiry.

Secretary of State for Education and Science

Q65. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Prime Minister if she will dismiss the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Reagan—Mr. Gorbachev (Meeting)

Q74. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister whether she will describe the methods by which the President of the United States of America is keeping her, and other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies, informed of the outcome of his discussions on disarmament with Mr. Gorbachev.

The Prime Minister: President Reagan has been meticulous in seeing we are both informed and consulted on the arms control talks. We had two meetings in New York last month, and we were in direct touch before the latest US proposals were tabled in Geneva. The day after he meets Mr. Gorbachev, President Reagan will brief a special session of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels, which I will attend.

Civil Servants (Duties)

Q89. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she will make proposals to allow civil servants who are asked by Ministers to draft statements to the House which those civil servants believe to be untrue, to make their dilemma known to either a Select Committee of the House or to a judicial body or to an inspector general.

The Prime Minister: No. There is no need for such proposals. If such an unlikely circumstance were to arise, it would be the duty of the civil servant to tell the Minister that he believed the statement to be untrue, and for the Minister to decide about his statement in the light of that.

Open University

Q111. **Mr. Freud** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to the Open university.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Drug Abuse

Q116. **Mr. Rathbone** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to establish a national drug abuse agency to co-ordinate all efforts to combat the drugs problem.

The Prime Minister: We have no present plans to do so. At national level Government action to tackle drug misuse is co-ordinated and energetically carried forward by the interdepartmental ministerial group on the misuse of drugs, chaired by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department. This work is accorded very high priority.

Security Vetting

Ms. Harman asked the Prime Minister if she will list *(a)* the jobs in Government services, *(b)* appointments

to judicial office, *(c)* appointments to quangos and *(d)* appointments to nationalised industries which require vetting from the security services.

The Prime Minister: It has not, under successive Governments, been the practice to disclose details of posts for which such clearance is required. In any event, such information is not available centrally.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I was present at Victoria station to meet the Amir of Qatar at the start of his state visit to this country. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall attend a state banquet given by Her Majesty the Queen in honour of the Amir of Qatar.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government have any plans to increase official overseas aid to the level of the United Nations target in the lifetime of the current Parliament.

The Prime Minister: Like their predecessors, the Government accept the United Nations 0·7 per cent. aid target in principle, but not a date for reaching it. Progress towards the target must depend on Britain's economic circumstances and other calls on our resources.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Diplomatic and Consular Buildings

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received concerning the refusal of the United States State Department to permit British companies to bid for their foreign buildings operations projects pursuant to section 11 of the Foreign Services Buildings Act of 1926 on the grounds that Britain refuses to allow substantially equal access to United States firms to participate in bidding on British diplomatic and consular building projects.

Mr. Channon: In addition to the case raised by my hon. and learned Friend in correspondence, my Department has received one further approach.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Classified Material

Mr. Bermingham asked the Lord Privy Seal how many officers and staff of the House have regular and constant access to secret and top secret material.

Mr. Biffen: No officers or staff of the House have regular and constant access to top secret material.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Expenditure Plans

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the Government's plans for expenditure on education and science in the period 1986-87 to 1988-89.

Sir Keith Joseph: As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his statement today, provision for education and science in 1986-87 will be increased by £300 million to £14,320 million from the figures in Cmnd. 9428.

There is an increase of £88 million in vote expenditure: within this, additional provision has been made for science through the science budget and the universities vote, for additional places in higher education in science, engineering and technology, and for the expected higher cost of student awards. Provision for vote expenditure in 1987-88 and 1988-89 has been increased by £84·5 million and £69 million respectively.

The total allocated to local authority current expenditure on education in the Government's plans is £10,815 million, £210 million more than the plans in Cmnd. 9428 as adjusted for Budget changes and so on. The total includes provision of up to £37 million in England for schemes of mid-day supervision (see paragraph 12 below). This represents an increase of around 5·8 per cent. in cash over the sum allocated to the service in 1985-86, after allowing for the transfer to the Manpower Services Commission of funding for some work-related non-advanced further education. It is, however, for local authorities to decide the balance between services within total relevant planned current expenditure in England of £22,250 million, taking into account their statutory obligations and Government policies.

The Government have not yet taken decisions about their provision for total local authority current expenditure in 1987-88 and 1988-89. In the meantime the 1986-87 total and its distribution, including the figures for local authority education, have been rolled forward for a further two years. However, in setting the level of the reserve, account has been taken of the possibility that local authority expenditure in 1986-87 and later years may exceed the Government's plans. The provision to be made within the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement will be considered next year in the light of authorities' budgets for 1986-87 and other factors.

Schools

Overall, school rolls will continue to fall, and the plans assume that authorities will secure a further reduction in the number of school-teachers they employ. Provided that the cost of employing staff can be contained, there should be scope for a continuing modest improvement in overall pupil:teacher ratios, compared with January 1985. The situation will vary between authorities in the light of local circumstances and the speed at which teachers can be redeployed in response to changing needs. The Government remain willing to make an addition of up to £160 million to the 1986-87 plans, and further sums in later years, if a satisfactory agreement is reached on schoolteachers' duties and salary structure.

I look to local education authorities to review those aspects of their provision which offer the prospect of

savings. Authorities continue to make good progress with the removal of surplus school places. I expect them to achieve the target of 1,125,000 places removed by March 1987: and am now consulting the local authority associations on the targets which I intend to set for later years. There is ample scope for reducing net expenditure on school meals, as is shown by the savings achieved by certain authorities in a variety of ways. The Audit Commission has drawn attention to the opportunities for greater efficiency in the caretaking and cleaning of schools. If local education authorities succeed in making the further savings for which there is scope, and contain their costs, the plans afford them the opportunity to redeploy resources in the light of local priorities and in the support of policies which give the most direct educational benefit to pupils.

Non-advanced further education

The overall level of resources proposed should enable authorities to respond to the growing demand for NAFE provision of many kinds. There are uncertainties about student numbers, particularly the effect on participation of the addition of a second year to the youth training scheme, but the plans assume increases in the participation rates of 16 and 17-year-olds.

The overall student:staff ratio for NAFE remained stable between 1983-84 and 1984-85 at 8·5:1. In the light of the Audit Commission's report on further education and other evidence, I believe tighter academic staffing in this sector to be desirable. The expenditure plans assume that the SSR figure will be raised by around 6 per cent. between 1984-85 and 1986-87. Provided that authorities make such staffing economies and contain their costs generally, the plans should allow some scope for redeployment to the benefit of the quality of education. The Government and the local education authorities are now engaged in a joint study of ways of improving efficiency in NAFE.

The plans for net expenditure on NAFE assume the transfer of £105 million in the financial year 1986-87 to the Manpower Services Commission to enable it to purchase a proportion of work-related non-advanced further education on the basis of development plans and annual programmes prepared by local education authorities.

In-service training

Both the Government and the local authorities attach importance to in-service training as a means of further developing the skills of teachers in schools and in further education. I have agreed with leaders of the local authority associations that the scheme of in-service training grants should be further enlarged in 1986-87. Grant of £22 million will be available in the 1986-87 financial year and three new priority areas will be included in the scheme: training to assist school teachers to respond to ethnic diversity, microelectronics in schools and management training for FE teachers. In addition, the scheme will provide for a special programme to support the introduction of the general certificate of secondary education.

For the future, the Government will introduce this Session legislation to extend the powers of the holder of my office to grant-aid in-service training. Expenditure to be supported by this new grant, which will be implemented from the 1987-88 financial year, will be determined each year.

Education Support Grants (ESGs)

The education support grants programme enters its second year in 1986-87. I have already invited local education authorities to bid for a programme of 16 activities of national priority in 1986-87 at a cost of £40 million to be supported by grant of £28 million. All local education authorities have accepted the invitation to bid. Additionally, the Government will now invite local education authorities to bid for resources under the programme to support schemes for the supervision of school pupils at mid-day. Subject to the approval by Parliament of legislation to raise the ceiling on expenditure assisted by education support grant from 0·5 per cent. to 1 per cent. of local authority current expenditure on education, up to £37 million will be available under this programme for mid-day supervision schemes in England in 1986-87: They come from the £1,250 million over four years which the Government have conditionally set aside for the reform of teachers' salary structure associated with an agreement on their duties. Up to £10 million within this total is also being made available for mid-day supervision in 1985-86.

Local Authority and Voluntary School Capital Expenditure

For 1986-87, £294 million will be available for allocation to local education authorities for capital expenditure on schools and colleges. When account is taken of education authorities' ability to make use of in-year and accumulated receipts and other flexibilties this should enable them to make progress with the removal of surplus school places. The Department will be writing in due course to local education authorities to inform them of the allocations within the education block. A further £2·7 million will be allocated to projects to provide additional places in science and technology in local authority provided higher education as part of the engineering and technology programme. Provision for grant to voluntary aided and special agreement schools has been increased by £6 million in each year in recognition of the increased pressure on the governors of these schools to undertake repairs in accordance with their duties under the Education Acts.

A revised system of control of local authority capital spending is under consideration for later years: the totals available for allocation in 1987-88 and 1988-89 will be considered in the light of the outcome of this consideration and other factors.

Higher Education

The cash available for each sector is set out in the following paragraphs. The figures allow for a tuition fee of £536 for home full-time and sandwich course students on courses designated for mandatory awards. The UGC and MAB plans for student admissions in 1986-87, together with admissions to other grant-aided institutions, are likely to satisfy the level of demand indicated by the revised variant Y projection shown in the Green Paper "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990's" (Cmnd 9524).

Student Awards

Provision has been made in each year to meet higher costs arising from increased student numbers and a higher proportion of mandatory award-holders within those numbers. Details of new rates of award and revised contribution scales will be announced later.

Engineering and Technology Programme

I am providing within my programme for the continuation in 1988-89 and later years of the engineering and technology programme announced in March, the costs of which up to 1987-88 have been met in part by transfers to my programme from those of other Government Departments. The programme is expected when fully operational to provide an extra 5,000 university and polytechnic places in engineering, information technology and related disciplines.

Advanced further education

Following consultation with the local authority associations I have determined under regulations made under the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 the quantum of advanced further education expenditure within the predetermined pool in 1986-87 at £661 million. This includes provision of some £1 million for recurrent expenditure by local authority institutions taking part in the engineering and technology programme; and otherwise represents an increase of 6 per cent. compared to the quantum for 1985-86, after taking into account the transfer to full local authority funding from 1986-87 of two institutions which are now funded in part by my Department.

I expect authorities to take the measures necessary to achieve in 1986-87 an average student:academic staff ratio of 12:1, in line with the target set by the National Advisory Body. The plans assume that authorities will look for further efficiency savings in non-teaching costs, compared to existing levels of expenditure and bearing in mind the recommendations on efficiency throughout further education made by the Audit Commission. The plans also include provision for public sector institutions to take part in the engineering and technology programme.

The National Advisory Body is considering how the quantum should be distributed between authorities. I shall decide each authority's share later in the year in the light of the NAB's advice.

Following consultations with the voluntary sector consultative council I have determined the quantum of AFE expenditure at voluntary colleges grant-aided solely by my Department at £45·4 million. I shall decide its distribution between the colleges later this year in the light of NAB's advice.

Universities

Subject to parliamentary approval, the total of recurrent grant for universities in the UGC list for the 1986-88 academic year will be £1,342 million. To the extent that the academic year falls partly in the 1987-88 financial year the grant is subject to review in the normal way.

Recurrent grant for the 1986-86 academic year will remain at £1,309 million.

I intend to increase the amount available to the UGC for the improvement of equipment in selected centres of research from £7 million to £10 million in each of the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88 and to make the same provision in 1988-89. In addition, I am making £1 million in 1986-87 and £2 million in each of the following years available to the computer board for the enhancement of the joint academic computing network. Together these two developments should significantly improve the facilities available in universities to the best of our research workers. General equipment grant for the universities for the academic year 1986-87 will be £95·1 million, which is a cash increase of 5·2 per cent. over the previous year. These figures do not include the separate provision being made over the academic years 1985-86 and 1986-87 for the equipment costs of the engineering and technology programme.

Fellowships in Humanities and Social Studies

In order to provide more opportunities for outstanding scholars in the fields of the humanities and social studies I am setting aside resources to enable the British Academy to award about 25 fellowships in these subjects in each of the academic years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

The Science Budget

The science budget, from which the research councils receive their grants in aid, will be £614 million in 1986-87, an increase in cash of £15 million over previous published plans for that year. £15 million additional cash provision compared with previous plans will be available in each following year. These sums will be distributed following advice from the ABRC, and should assist the councils to follow up promising new developments in a variety of scientific fields and so provide more opportunities for talented scientists to pursue research in this country.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Mr. Madel asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement about the programme of preparation of teachers for the general certificate of secondary education.

Sir Keith Joseph: Preparations for the introduction of the GCSE, including the special programme of in-service training for GCSE teachers, are on course and proceeding to the timetable set for the introduction of the new examinations.

Under phase 1 of the special programme, the GCSE examing groups and the LEAs are currently making preparations for the later phases of the programmes: the in-service training seminars that will be conducted throughout 1986, beginning in January. Teacher's guides, prepared under the auspices of the Secondary Examination Council, will be distributed at the beginning of January to all GCSE teachers in readiness for these seminars; supporting videos will also be available for all schools and colleges.

The local authority associations have, however, made representations about the funding available to LEAs to meet the costs of the later phases of the special programme, during which first subject representatives (phase 2) and then all teachers (phase 3) will receive in-service training. At their request, and subject to the consent of Parliament, I have agreed to increase from 70 per cent. to 90 per cent. the rate of grant payable to LEAs towards the cost of providing cover for subject representatives attending phase 2 seminars. I have also considered their view that, whilst it is neither desirable nor practicable to provide cover for all the remaining teachers

attending phase 3 seminars, it would be of help to LEAs in the organisation of these seminars if some resources were available to provide a limited amount of cover. Again, subject to the consent of Parliament, I am prepared to bring phase 3 seminars within the scope of the in-service teacher training grants scheme and thus to support expenditure of up to £2 million for teachers released to attend these seminars.

These changes, requested by the local authority associations, will I am sure be widely welcomed by LEAs and will be of help to them in their planning of the GCSE training programme.

The Department is issuing today a circular letter to LEAs informing them of these revised arrangements and giving advance notice of other elements for inclusion within the in-service teacher training grants scheme for the academic year 1986-87. It is my intention to lay new regulations before Parliament as soon as possible.

Medical Research Council

57. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding the current budget of the Medical Research Council.

Mr. Brooke: The Department has received 23 approaches from hon. Members and other interested parties relating in whole or in part to the current budget of the Medical Research Council.

Education Acts (Appeals)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science by what means the Government regulate and assess the progress of the Education Acts 1980 and 1981 in respect of educational appeals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The local appeal provisions of the 1980 and 1981 Acts are fully implemented and are available for parents to use as they wish. The arrangements do not require detailed Governmental oversight, but my right hon. Friend has limited powers to intervene if complaints about the local machinery are found to be justified. In addition, my right hon. Friend is directly involved in certain appeals which may be made to him under the 1981 Act.

Polytechnics

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects the National Advisory Body to make recommendations on future polytechnics.

Mr. Brooke: I understand that the NAB hopes to offer advice in 1986.

Education Statistics

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he will list in the *Official Report* the number of occasions, and the local education authority involved in each case, on which a parent has been fined under the Education Act 1981 for failing to present a child for examination;

(2) what information is available to his Department in respect of *(a)* the number of children excluded from full-time education pending assessment and statementing under the procedures of the Education Act 1981 and *(b)* the average period undergone without full-time education by such children; and whether he will make a statement;

(3) whether he will list in the *Official Report* the number of occasions, and the local education authority involved in each case, on which a parent has *(a)* sought, *(b)* received and *(c)* been refused permission to remove a child with special educational needs from a special school under the Education Act 1981.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not collect this information.

Science Budget

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* the science budget for each year since 1971 *(a)* as a fraction of gross domestic product and *(b)* in real terms using (i) the retail prices index and (ii) the inflation factor used by the Department of Trade and Industry as appropriate for research and development in each case, to the latest available date.

Mr. Brooke: The table shows the information requested:

Year	*Column 1 Science Budget* £m	*Column 2 Science Budget as a fraction of gross domestic product*	*Column 3 Science Budget in real terms using retail price Index** £m	*Column 4 Science Budget in real terms using DTI R & D Index†* £m
1971-72	126·0	0·00212	554·1	607·4
1972-73	139·4	0·00208	572·9	609·8
1973-74‡	143·9	0·00193	541·4	566·7
1974-75	157·2	0·00176	509·7	520·6
1975-76	191·5	0·00171	499·8	498·5
1976-77	227·8	0·00175	510·1	513·8
1977-78	250·4	0·00166	484·0	501·4
1978-79	281·7	0·00163	502·8	506·4
1979-80	326·3	0·00158	513·6	509·5
1980-81	394·5	0·00166	526·3	516·8
1981-82‖	450·7	0·00174	537·5	522·1
1982-83	481·6	0·00170	528·8	509·2

Year	Column 1 Science Budget £m	Column 2 Science Budget as a fraction of gross domestic product	Column 3 Science Budget in real terms using retail price Index* £m	Column 4 Science Budget in real terms using DTI R & D Index† £m
1983-84	516·3	0·00169	542·0	516·3
1984-85	549·9	0·00169	549·9	N/A
1985-86¶	583·9	N/A	N/A	N/A

* Based on average 1984-85 prices
† Based on average 1983-84 prices
‡ 1973-74 £12m (cash) was transferred from the Science Budget to Government Departments under the Rothschild arrangements for commissioned research.
‖ 1981-82 £14m (cash) transferred back to Science Budget from Health Departments to Medical Research Council
¶ RPI and DTI R & D indices not available beyond 1984-85, nor figure for total GDP

Particle Physics

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what study of the technological side benefits from particle physics his Department is planning before a decision is made on the recommendation of the Kendrew committee; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) what study has been made by his Department of the technological spin-offs from particle physics research and development; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Comments on the value of technological spin-off and other side benefits from particle physics research and development were made in the report of the Kendrew review group. My right hon. Friend intends to take full account of those, and similar subsequent, assessments before any decision is made, but he is not planning any further study of those aspects.

CERN

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* the United Kingdom contribution to CERN in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* real terms and *(c)* as a percentage of the science budget in each year since 1971.

Mr. Brooke: The information requested is as follows:

Financial year	Cash terms £ million	Real terms* £ million	As percentage of science budget
1971-72	8·47	48·4	6·7
1972-73	9·37	53·4	6·7
1973-74	13·64	50·2	9·5
1974-75	16·01	46·7	10·2
1975-76	18·57	43·2	9·7
1976-77	23·16	43·0	10·2
1977-78	23·78	39·4	9·5
1978-79	27·70	37·7	9·8
1979-80	25·25	35·9	7·7
1980-81	22·38	33·9	5·7
1981-82	22·48	30·4	5·0
1982-83	26·56	30·0	5·5
1983-84	32·13	32·4	6·2
1984-85	35·51	35·5	6·5

* By using Swiss currency equivalent of figure in left-hand column, converting that to constant 1984-85 prices using Swiss indices, and reconverting to £ at 1984-85 exchange rate.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* the representations he has received in respect of the United Kingdom's particle physics budget and participation in CERN; and how many of the representations advocated continuing the United Kingdom commitment to that project.

Mr. Brooke: Since the publication of the Kendrew report my right hon. Friend has received 39 letters concerning particle physics and CERN. Many of these letters included a copy of a resolution adopted by a recent meeting of over 100 particle physicists. All the letters indicated concern at the possibility of the United Kingdom withdrawing from CERN.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with his colleagues in those countries signatory to the 1954 CERN convention concerning the recommendations of the Kendrew committee that the budget of CERN should be cut by 25 per cent. and on the possible withdrawal of the United Kingdom from CERN; and whether he will make a statement on the outcome of those discussions.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has had no such discussions with his colleagues in CERN member states, but he informed them of the establishment of the Kendrew review group and sent them a copy of the report. Furthermore he has undertaken to consult them should any change be contemplated in the United Kingdom's relationship with CERN.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education (1) what information is available to his Department in respect of the effects on international scientific collaboration of *(a)* a 25 per cent. cut in the United Kingdom particle physics budget and *(b)* withdrawal from CERN by the United Kingdom; and whether he will make a statement on the implications for the United Kingdom;

(2) what information is available to his Department in respect of the impact on the CERN project of a 25 per cent. cut in the United Kingdom particle physics budget.

Mr. Brooke: Action is in hand to assess the likely effects and implications using a number of sources, but precise assessments are not practicable.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to announce his decision in respect of the recommendations of the Kendrew committee.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend is considering the advice he has received from the advisory board for the research councils and the science and engineering research council on the recommendations of the Kendrew review group. An announcement will be made as soon as this consideration, including any necessary consultation with other member states of CERN, is complete.

Detained Young Persons

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to seek to amend section 116 of the Education Act 1944 in respect of the educational rights of young people in custody; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: No. My right hon. Friend has received no representations which indicate that such a step is necessary.

Student Support

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he expects to publish a consultative paper as part of his review of the student support system; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: The possibility of replacing maintenance grants wholly or partly with loans has been ruled out at the present time by the Government. As I announced on 17 July at column *165*, I have been considering the publication of a consultative document in which student loans would not feature as an option, but have concluded that no useful purpose would be served by the publication of such a paper.

ENVIRONMENT

Public Expenditure Programme

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he plans any changes in his public expenditure programme.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced the main changes to the Government's public expenditure plans for 1986-87 and the following two years. The following table gives details of the major changes in my Department's programmes.

The total net housing programme is being increased by £220 million in 1986-87 and by £200 million in 1987-88. This will enable gross provision for capital expenditure in 1986-87 to be set at £3,250 million, £200 million above the figure for 1985-86 published in last year's White Paper.

The major part of this increased provision will be for local authorities to enable them to make progress in dealing with the problem of serious disrepair revealed by the report of the inquiry into the condition of their stock, which I am publishing separately today.

I shall be announcing later, in the usual way, the apportionment of this total between the local authorities, the Housing Corporation and new towns. I shall as usual be consulting the Housing Consultative Council and the Housing Corporation on the details.

Widespread problems of disrepair have been growing up over the years since the great expansion of municipal housing in the 1950s and 1960s. We have now, however, for the first time commissioned a systematic inquiry, which reveals the extent of the problem. A greater concentration of resources is clearly required to deal with this situation over a number of years.

Local authorities have already been giving increasing priority to housing renovation. Last year over £2 billion was spent on this (over £1 billion on capital account and a further £1 billion on revenue). In the light of the inquiry report, and as a result of the additional resources I am now making available, I now look to them to give even greater priority to this work.

The private sector should also be brought in to assist whenever this is possible. Private sector resources and skills have a major part to play in developing new patterns of ownership and management in co-operation with tenants, for an increasing number of local authority estates.

New building by local authorities must be a lower priority. In most areas new local authority building for general needs has rightly been reduced to very low levels — these needs can more appropriately be met by the private sector. The continuing success of our right-to-buy policies also means that thousands more families every year are able to become owner-occupiers. Local authority new building should increasingly be concentrated on providing for elderly and disabled people and others with special needs. Similarly, improvement grants should be targeted primarily to those who can least afford to pay for repair and improvement of their own homes.

In the other environment services programme, provision for local authority local environmental services capital, net of receipts, has been increased by £39 million, to £205 million for 1986-87. The revised level of provision more realistically reflects the perceived level of need for spending on these services.

Ministers are currently reviewing Government policies affecting the inner cities. Meantime, provision for the urban programme is being maintained at the levels shown in Cmnd. 9428.

I have increased the resources for the derelict land scheme over previously planned provision to maintain a high rate of clearance; and the urban development corporations are to retain some £11 million extra receipts from disposal of developed land to plough back into their development programme.

I shall also be making additional resources available to the Nature Conservancy Council for its statutory responsibilities for protection of natural habitats; for the Countryside Commission's successful "Groundwork" projects in rundown countryside around towns and other work; to the Development Commission, to maintain the pace of provision of workshops and small factories in rural areas; to the Sports Council to boost in particular its valuable work in the inner cities; and for the heritage to continue the rehabilitation and conservation of our historic houses, parks and monuments.

These additions are more than offset by extra receipts now expected from the new towns' programme of disposal of completed commercial and industrial properties. New investment by the new towns is not affected, and remains at the previously planned level.

As regards overall local authority spending, my predecessor announced on 26 July that we have increased local authority relevant current expenditure provision for 1986-87 by some £500 million. I have consulted local government on the various elements of the 1986-87 rate support grant settlement and will lay proposals before Parliament in December.

There was a substantial overspend on local authority net capital provision in England in 1984-85. It is most important for national economic management that spending be brought into line with our public expenditure plans.

Accordingly, I am considering how the figures announced today on provision can be translated into capital expenditure allocations for local authorities intended to bring expenditure within the cash limit in 1986-87. I shall make a further announcement shortly.

The external financing limit for water authorities in England and Wales (excluding MAFF grants) remains as assumed in the Cmnd. 9428 planning total. The British Waterways Board EFL for 1986-87 is £45 million, the same as in 1985-86.

An additional £8 million for 1986-87 has been allocated to the Property Services Agency, mainly to cover increases in current expenditure on the civil estate.

*£ million cash

	1985-86 Cmnd. 9428 provision	1986-87 Cmnd. 9428 provision	1986-87 Revised† provision	1987-88 Cmnd. 9428 provision	1987-88 Revised† provision	1988-89 Provision†
Housing (Local authority, Housing Corporation and New Towns):						
Capital						
Gross Expenditure	3,051	3,120	3,250	3,150	3,210	3,110
Receipts	−1,730	−1,530	−1,600	−1,430	−1,480	−1,330
Net Capital Expenditure	1,321	1,590	1,650	1,720	1,730	1,780
Current Expenditure‡	954	940	1,100	910	1,100	1,100
Programme total:						
Net capital plus current	2,280	2,530	2,750	2,630	2,830	2,880
DOE Other Environment Services (OES):						
Local Environmental Services						
Current Expenditure (excluding Urban Programme Current)	2,201	2,334	2,594	2,360	‖2,594	‖2,594
Other Local Authority Current	171	181		183		
Local Environmental Services (excluding Coast Protection):						
Capital Expenditure:						
Gross	527	538	576	552	559	567
Receipts	−360	−371	−371	−380	−380	−390
Net	167	167	205	172	179	177
New Towns (Industrial and Commerical; Sewerage):						
Gross	58	48	48	49	49	51
Receipts	−100	−60	−130	−60	−110	−101
Net	−42	−12	−82	−10	−60	−50
Urban Programme (DOE component, including* current expenditure)	241	226	226	232	232	237
Derelict Land Reclamation, Urban Development Corporation	151	156	160	164	168	173
Royal Parks, Ancient Monuments, Heritage	93	102	109	105	110	113
DOE Administration, Environmental Research‡	143	157	139	142	140	143
Environmental bodies; Development Commission; Sports Councils; Nature Conservancy Council; Countryside Commission	99	108	123	110	124	126
Water Research and Other Water Services	9	8	7	9	8	8
Nationalised Industries' External Finance (Regional Water Authorities, England and Wales excluding MAFF grants; British Waterways Board)	213	139	138	36	34	34
PSA: Office and General:						
Accommodation: Parliamentary Accommodation●	84	−110	■−84	−105	■−94	−96
Total Local Authority Relevant Current Expenditure (covering all Departments' services)	21,314	21,750	22,254	21,950	‖22,254	‖22,254

* Totals may not sum due to rounding.

† Revised provision figures include technical adjustments since Cmnd. 9428, as well as survey changes.

‡ After transfer of PESC provision for DOE housing administration from Housing to OES.

‖ Figures as for 1986-87: no decision has yet been taken on the appropriate provision of 1987-88 and 1988-89, which will be considered in the

light of local authorities' budgets for 1986-87 and other factors.

• Urban programme provision maintained at Cmnd. 9428 level, pending Ministers' review of inner city policy and expenditure.

• PESC provision is negative because Departments' market-rent payments to PSA under the property repayment service system exceed PSA's costs, because of properties held on Crown freehold or at low historic rents.

• Revised figures include other PESC adjustments since Cmnd. 9428

Housing Stock

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now publish the results of his Department's inquiry into the condition of local authority housing stock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: A report setting out the main results of this inquiry has been published by my Department today. I have placed a copy in the Library. Other copies are available in the Vote Office. Local authorities' responses to the inquiry indicated that in their view some 84 per cent. of their properties require some renovation or repair work: and that, on the basis of their estimates, the total cost of all the work they believe is needed would be £18·8 billion.

This is the first occasion on which any Government have commissioned such an inquiry. We did so because of our concern about the condition of the local authority stock and because we considered it helpful to have more detailed and comprehensive information on both the nature and scale of the problem. We now intend to discuss the results with the local authority associations. My Department is ready to help with the exchange and sharing of information both on renovation needs and possible solutions, including technical advice from my Department's Building Research Establishment.

The renovation problem has been accentuated by the telescoping of disrepair arising out of the natural aging of the pre-war housing stock and the unexpected structural problems now emerging in the non-traditional and post-war stock. Some of these problems are emerging in buildings which have been up less than 20 years. But these problems have not developed overnight and will have to be tackled in a measured way over a number of years. Not all the work is equally urgent or important: I therefore expect authorities to continue with their present efforts to identify priorities and to tackle the most urgent work first.

I should also stress that I look to local authorities to examine renovation options carefully. There is growing scope for private finance, and for imaginative solutions to problems of housing renovation and management, in consultation with tenants. Tenants are concerned not just with the physical fabric of estates and the facilities within their own homes, but with how estates are managed and, indeed, all the factors which affect the quality of their lives. The legislation we shall be bringing forward during this Session will encourage these initiatives. My Department's urban housing renewal unit, which was set up in June, is making good progress in discussing with authorities ways of introducing private finance and other measures to improve the quality of life for tenants.

In addition to all these measures to revitalise rundown council estates, it is clear that local authorities will need some additional public expenditure resources to deal with the problems identified by the inquiry. I am making a separate announcement about this today.

Housing Improvement

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the objectives and priorities of the urban housing renewal unit.

Sir George Young: Ministers have set up the urban housing renewal unit to help local authorities tackle the problems of their rundown estates in a variety of imaginative ways, such as redevelopment projects involving the private sector, community refurbishment schemes and local estate-based management initiatives along the lines of the priority estates project. The unit is concentrating its effort on the 69 authorities with the worst problems, by offering detailed advice and assistance on individual estates, but it will respond to a request for help from any English local authority. Authorities have welcomed this initiative and are responding most constructively.

Mr. Cohen asked he Secretary of State for the Environment what responses he has received *(a)* to the proposals relating to the criteria for qualification as unfit housing and *(b)* to the proposals as a whole, contained in the Green Paper on improvement policy, Cmnd. 9513.

Sir George Young: In response to its wide consultation on the Green Paper, my Department has, to date, received 423 responses to the proposals as a whole. Of those, some 40 per cent. specifically mentioned the proposed fitness criteria.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to expand the urban housing renewal unit and the funds available to it.

Sir George Young: The urban housing renewal unit is offering local authorities detailed advice and assistance on tackling the problems of their rundown estates. It can help authorities to maximise private sector funding opportunities and can influence the direction of public sector resources, where necessary. We are keeping both the size of the unit and the resources at its disposal under close review, as requests from local authorities for assistance increase.

Urban Programme

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish details of the indicators used to select authorities eligible to bid for resources under the 1986-87 urban programme and list for each urban area with a population of more than 30,000 its score on each indicator.

Sir George Young: Details of the indicators used to select authorities eligible to bid for urban programme resources, and the scores for individual authorities, are contained in my Department's "Census Information Note No. 2", copies of which are in the Library of the House. For the purpose of selecting the authorities to be given priority for support under the traditional urban programme for 1986-87, latest data about unemployment rates derived from the *Employment Gazette* have also been taken into account.

House Purchase Assistance Scheme

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* loans and *(b)* grants have been made under the house purchase assistance scheme during each financial year since its introduction; and what has been the annual cost of the scheme to public funds.

Sir George Young: The Department records only the totals paid, not the number of bonuses and grants. Since loans are fixed at £600, the number can be calculated from the total of payments. Bonuses, however, vary in amount between £40 and £110, and such a calculation is therefore not possible. Details are as follows:

Financial Year	*Loan Payments*	*Bonus Payments*	*Estimated number of loans*	**Net cost*
	£ million	*£ million*		*£ million*
1980-81	0·36	0·06	602	0·42
1981-82	3·33	0·54	5,545	3·84
1982-83	3·77	0·59	6,277	4·24
1983-84	2·54	0·41	4,240	2·48
1984-85	2·15	0·35	3,580	1·61
†1985-86	0·57	0·10	950	0·28

* Total payments less repayments of loans and interest on late repayments.
† To September 1985.

Smith Houses

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in view of the evidence submitted to him by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West from building societies and lending institutions, stating their policy in refusing loan facilities on Smith constructed properties, he will now include those properties in section 1 of the Housing Defects Act; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend is considering most carefully recent further evidence on Smith houses, including the information supplied by the hon. Lady about building society lending policies. I hope to make an announcement concerning the question of designation of Smith houses under the Housing Defects Act very shortly.

Great Grimsby (Housing)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new council houses and flats have been built in Great Grimsby in each year since 1975.

Sir George Young: The numbers of council dwelling completions reported by Great Grimsby during 1975 to 1979 appear in issues 37, 41, 45, 49 and 59, respectively, of "Local Housing Statistics", those during 1980 to 1983 in issue 73 and 1984 in issue 74: copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what the percentage increase has been in net public expenditure on house building in Great Grimsby between 1979-80 and 1984-85 in real and cash terms.

Sir George Young: Public expenditure on house building in Great Grimsby by the borough council and the Housing Corporation was 46 per cent. lower in cash terms and 64 per cent. lower in real terms in 1984-85 than in 1979-80.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants in Great Grimsby in each year since May 1979.

Sir George Young: The numbers of right-to-buy sales and other sales to sitting tenants reported during the financial years 1980-81, 1981-82 and 1982-83 appear in issues 62, 63 and 67, respectively, of "Local Housing Statistics", and during 1983-84 and 1984-85 in issue 75: Copies are available in the Library. Sales to sitting tenants were not separately reported before 1980-81.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the present size of the housing stock in Great Grimsby.

Sir George Young: The borough council reported a total of 34,628 dwellings in Great Grimsby at 1 April 1985 in its latest housing investment programme return.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how great a factor the attitude of the local populations will be in his final choice of sites for the building of nuclear waste repositories.

Mrs. Rumbold: The views of local people will be a material consideration in any decisions made.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to take any measures to ensure that the residents of the areas proposed as sites for nuclear waste repositories will be made aware of *(a)* the proposal to build the repository in the vicinity, *(b)* the exact nature the use to which the site would be put, *(c)* the implications of the proposal for the future of the area and *(d)* the arguments, both for and against, the building of the repository.

Mrs. Rumbold: Any planning application by NIREX for disposal of waste will be subject to a public inquiry following advertisement and notification of particular parties affected. NIREX will be expected to submit with any such application information on the nature of the development proposed and how the site as so developed would be used. It will also be expected to submit a report of an assessment of the wider environmental implications of its proposal. There will be a full opportunity at any public inquiry for people interested to express views for and against what is proposed.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reaffirm that, consequent on the abolition of the metropolitan county councils, metropolitan district councils will not have to pay former metropolitan county council staff they employ to run the devolved services the same salary as they received formerly.

Mr. Tracey: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the responses received to his Department's consultation paper arising from the Local Government Act 1985 regarding compensation for financial detriment for staff of the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Tracey: No.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of the London and Metropolitan Government Staff Commission's circular No. 9 issued on 11 October, he will instruct the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission further to consider designating staff of the Greater London council currently working on historic building functions for transfer to the commission.

Mr. Tracey: No.

Housing Construction (Liverpool)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on housing construction in Liverpool in the past three years; and if he will show how his Department's publication, "Local Housing Statistics", takes account of starts in the private and other public sectors which became transferred to the local authority.

Mr. John Patten: In the three years 1982 to 1984, 793 dwellings were completed in Liverpool for the city council, 1,499 for housing associations and 2,091 for the private sector.

If any dwelling is first reported by an authority as started in one category of ownership but is reported, in a later period, to have been transferred before completion to another category, the numbers shown as under construction at the end of that period in the two categories are adjusted to reflect the transfer. In due course, the dwelling appears in completions in the new category in "Local Housing Statistics". Liverpool city council reported that 88 dwellings which had been started in the private sector were transferred to it and included as completions for the council in 1983. No such transfers were reported for 1982 or 1984.

Housing Defects Act

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total value of extra resources requested by local authorities to operate the Housing Defects Act following his circular 9/85; and how this compares with the total extra resources made available.

Mr. John Patten: The local authorities in England which responded to circular 9/85 indicated that they could incur some £131 million in 1985-86 on statutory obligations under the Housing Defects Act. The need for expenditure under the Act was taken into account when the housing investment programme allocations for 1985-86 were first set; but we announced on 9 August 1985, in response to the circular, that additional allocations of up to £37 million would be made available to those authorities which would otherwise be unable to meet their obligations under the Act.

Rural Areas (Relative Disadvantage Report)

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received the report on the study of relative disadvantage experience by those in rural areas commissioned by his Department; and what plans he has for publication of this report.

Mrs. Rumbold: The final report of this study entitled "Deprivation in Rural Areas", carried out by Chelmer institute of higher education on behalf of my Department and the Development Commission, was received in June. It is currently being evaluated, after which plans for publication will be considered.

GLC (Grants)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to give his decision on the consent to the grant to the Brent and Harrow Engineering Group Training Association for which the Greater London council applied on 24 July.

Mr. Tracey: This application was received on 19 September. A decision will be reached as soon as possible.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to give his decision on the consent to the grant to the Brixton Young Families Housing Aid Association, for which the Greater London council applied on 24 July.

Sir George Young: This application was received on 15 October. A decision will be reached as soon as possible.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to give his decision on the consent to the grant to the Hounslow Engineering Group Training Association for which the Greater London council applied on 12 September.

Mr. Tracey: As soon as possible.

Canary Wharf Scheme

Mr. Evennet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will call in the Canary wharf scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The scheme, which is still under discussion between the developers and LDDC, is for a major development, primarily of offices, on Canary wharf in the London docklands development area. The site is located almost entirely in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone. As a result, it benefits from the automatic planning permission which goes with the enterprise zone regime laid down in the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980. That Act makes no provision for the intervention of the Secretary of State to call in an individual planning application for public inquiry as with other major planning cases.

I take the view that, having established through the EZ system a particular means of providing planning permission in parts of the country which are in urgent need of regeneration, it would not be right for me to intervene.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Civil Defence

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that Welwyn and Hatfield district council is fulfilling its obligations with respect to the provision of civil defence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We are determined to ensure that all local authorities meet their civil defence obligations in full. Primary responsibility under the 1983 regulations lies

with county, not district councils, who have been asked to complete plans by the end of the year. We shall then review progress and prepare a staged programme for further action.

Coal Industry Dispute (Policing Costs)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total transfer of resources from aiding to aided police authorities in England and Wales arising out of the coal dispute 1984 to 1985; what value of the transfer has since been reimbursed by aided authorities; what proportion of costs was paid by central Government; and how many authorities have yet to settle their accounts.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In the course of the miners' dispute some 1·4 million officer-days were provided to forces policing the dispute by other forces. It is for the police authorities concerned to settle between them payments for aid provided. There is no central record of such individual transactions or the costs involved.

Police (Cambridgeshire)

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of police per head of the population in Cambridgeshire; and how this compares with other constabularies in England and Wales.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 31 December 1984 the number of police per thousand population in Cambridgeshire was 1·89 compared with the average of 2·39 for all police forces in England and Wales, and 2·15 for police forces outside London in England and Wales.

Immigration Rules (Members' Names)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out in the *Official Report*, the names of those hon. Members referred to in his statement of Tuesday 29 October concerning the immigration rules and the number of instances of alleged abuse in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I have not yet received replies from all of the hon. Members to whom I have written. The House will be informed of the outcome of the correspondence in due course.

Young Persons

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information is available to his Department in respect of the number of young people below the school leaving age and over the age of 14 years who are detained in penal institutions and youth custody centres who are not receiving education; and what proportion of the young people so detained the figure represents, in each case at the latest available date.

Mr. Mellor: All sentenced inmates below school leaving age are normally occupied in full-time education (excluding PE) for at least 15 hours a week. The same applies generally to those remanded in custody, subject to factors such as further court appearances.

Deaf Suspects (Code of Practice)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions his Department has had with the British Deaf Association concerning the code of practice on the detention, treatment and questioning of persons by the police under the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act; why safeguards sought by the association for deaf suspects were not included in the code; and if he will meet the association to discuss its concern about the code.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Department has considered proposals put forward by the British Deaf Association for amending the provisions of the code of practice. It has throughout been our objective to ensure that the code provides essential safeguards for the rights of deaf people questioned by the police without subjecting the police to unduly rigid or unnecessary requirements. We believe the draft which has now been laid before Parliament strikes a proper balance. I would be happy to meet the right hon Member together with representatives of the association to discuss their concern.

Cinemas (Safety Regulations)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what organisations representing disabled people have made representations about the draft guidance proposed to accompany new cinema safety regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The following organisations representing disabled people have sent comments:

Access Committee for England
Access for All
All Party Disablement Group, House of Commons
Association of Disabled Professionals
The Balham Network
Birmingham Royal Institution for the Blind
British Council of Organisations of Disabled People
Carnegie Council (Arts and Disabled People)
Centre on Environment for the Handicapped
Cleveland Council for the Disabled
Coventry Council for the Disabled
Disabled Living Foundation
Exeter Access Committee
Greater London Association for Disabled People (GLAD)
Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
Harrow Association for Disability
Insight Group of Visually Handicapped
Invalid Children's Aid Association
Joint Committee on Mobility for the Disabled
Leicestershire Standing Conference of Voluntary Organisations for the Physically Handicapped
Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Federation of the Blind of the United Kingdom
The National League of the Blind and Disabled
Northern Shape
Oldham Disability Action Group
PHAB (Physically Handicapped and Abled Bodied)
Prince of Wales Advisory Group on Disability
Project for the Mentally Handicapped
Projects by the Blind, Wandsworth
Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation
Royal National Institute for the Blind
Royal National Institute for the Deaf
Scottish Council on Disability (Committee on Access for Scotland)
The Spastic Society
The Spinal Injuries Association
Sutton Talking Newspaper Association
Taff Ely Disabled Group
Wales Council for the Disabled.

All comments sent by these organisations and by other interested organisations and individuals are now being considered.

Drug Trafficking (Extradition)

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made thus far towards the drafting of a third United Nations convention on illicit drug trafficking which would provide for multilateral extradition arrangements for persons arrested for drug offences.

Mr. Mellor: Earlier this year the Secretary-General of the United Nations invited member states to submit comments and proposals on the elements which might be included in a new convention on the illicit drug traffic. A copy of the United Kingdom's response was placed in the Library on 3 July. At its meeting next February the United Nations commission on narcotic drugs will consider the responses made by Governments, with a view to initiating the preparation of the text of a draft convention. The United Kingdom will be pressing for quick progress on those aspects where international co-operation is vital, including more effective extradition arrangements.

Commander P. Corbett (North Devon Trip)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the status of the trip in a chauffeur-driven car by Commander Phil Corbett of the Metropolitan police to north Devon to meet retired police officer Harry Clement about an interview he had given to the BBC; and what was the cost of the trip and the overnight stay of Commander Corbett and his driver.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Roy Garner and Mr. Kenneth Ross

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the outcome of the investigation into allegations against Mr. Roy Garner and Mr. Kenneth Ross reopened after the Attorney-General's answer to the then hon. Member for Lewisham, West on 26 July 1982, *Official Report*, column *359*.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The investigations have been continuing since before 1982 and certain matters are at present before the courts.

BBC ("Brass Tacks" Programme)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will place in the Library details of all communications between the Metropolitan police and the BBC about the "Brass Tacks" film, "The Untouchable."

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the Metropolitan police communicated with the BBC about its "Brass Tacks" programme which referred to Mr. Garner's case; what was the substance of the communications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The contents of the communications between the Metropolitan police and the BBC were confidential but did not deal with the cases of specific individuals.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Jury Challenges (Survey)

Mr. Greenway asked the Attorney-General when he expects the Crown Prosecution Service to have completed its survey on jury challenges by defence counsel; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions is considering the earliest date on which a survey can be commenced. At present it is not anticipated that the survey will be completed until 1987.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Works Loan Board (Interest Rate)

Mr. Colvin asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current Public Works Loan Board rate of interest; and how this is fixed in relation to base rate.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Public Works Loan Board lends at both fixed and variable rates of interest. The rate depends on the type of loan and on the method and period of repayment. Rates are not fixed in relation to commercial banks' base rates. Fixed rates are derived from current yields on gilt-edged stock and are published regularly in the London and Edinburgh *Gazettes*. Variable rates are set at a small margin, which is currently ¼ per cent. above eligible bill rates in the case of loans with one or three-month interest periods, and above the lower of eligible bill rates or six-month LIBOR in the case of loans with six-month interest periods. The rates prevailing on any particular day are available to borrowers on application to the board.

Henry Ansbacher Bank

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the Bank of England's involvement, including financial involvement, with the Henry Ansbacher bank and its subsidiaries and related group companies.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Henry Ansbacher & Co. Ltd. is a recognised bank under the Banking Act 1979 and is supervised by the Bank of England. It is not the Bank of England's normal practice to comment on its financial relationships with individual institutions.

Unitary Taxation

Mr. Grylls asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on unitary taxation.

Mr. Moore: I am placing in the Library of the House a copy of the press release of Her Majesty's Treasury of 8 November giving the texts of statements on unitary taxation issued on that day by Her Majesty's Government and the President of the United States.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the estimated revenue that would be obtained by increasing the basic rate of income tax by 1p; and if he will give the estimated revenue that would be obtained by increasing the rate of value added tax by 1 per cent.

Mr. Moore: The direct revenue yield from increasing the basic rate of income tax by 1p is estimated to be about £1,200 million in a full year at 1986-87 income levels. An increase of 1 percentage point in the standard rate of VAT would yield net additional revenue of about £925 million at 1986-87 prices.

Privatisation

Mr. Craigen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much has been raised from the sale of public assets in each fiscal year since 1979-80; what percentage of income to the Treasury these sales represented; and what costs were incurred in the process of the sales in each year.

Mr. Moore: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) on 16 May 1985 at column *191-92*, which shows proceeds from special sales of assets and sales of land and buildings since 1979-80. In line with internationally agreed conventions, proceeds from such sales are not treated as income in the "National Accounts". Fees and commissions associated with flotations up to the end of 1984-85 were given in my reply to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on 24 May 1985 at column *562-66*. Information about the costs incurred by local authorities in connection with sales of land and buildings is not held centrally.

Demand

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the level of real demand in the economy each year since 1960; and what was the growth rate in each of those years.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 November 1985, c. *69*]: Figures for the level of real demand in the economy (interpreted as final expenditure on goods and services at 1980 market prices) are as follows for the years 1960 to 1962:

	£ million
1960	170,859
1961	175,364
1962	177,515

Figures for subsequent years are published in table 1.5 in the 1985 edition of the CSO publication "United Kingdom National Accounts". The growth rates requested may be readily derived using this information.

Oil and Gas Revenues

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing actuals and forecasts, as approprate, for the years 1973-74 to 1993-94, for *(a)* North Sea oil and gas revenues ast the same level of detail as in Table 12 of the 1985 Brown Book and *(b)* proceeds of the gas levy.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 November 1985, c. *69*]: The latest figures for Government revenues from United Kingdom oil and gas production and the gas levy in each year from 1973-74 are as follows:

Year	*Royalty*	*Supplementary petroleum duty*	*Petroleum revenue tax*	*Corporation tax*			*£ million*	*Gas levy*
				Total before ACT set-off	*ACT set-off*	*Main stream CT*	*Total government revenues from United Kingdom oil and gas production*	
1973-74	12	—	—	3	—	3	15	—
1974-75	15	—	—	5	—	5	20	—
1975-76	20	—	—	5	—	5	25	—
1976-77	71	—	—	10	—	10	81	—
1977-78	228	—	—	10	—	10	238	—
1978-79	289	—	183	93	40	53	565	—
1979-80	628	—	1,435	248	78	170	2,311	—
1980-81	992	—	2,410	333	97	236	3,735	—
1981-82	1,396	2,025	2,390	680	270	410	6,491	383
1982-83	1,632	2,395	3,274	513	202	311	7,814	471
1983-84	1,904	—	6,017	861	428	433	8,782	522
1984-85	2,426	—	7,177	2,399	1,242	1,157	12,002	500
*1985-86	2,500	—	8,200	2,800	1,200	1,600	13,500	520

* Forecast: as published in the 1985-86 Financial Statement and Budget Report.

Forecasts of total Government revenues from United Kingdom oil and gas production for each financial year up to 1988-89 were published in table 2.3 of the 1985-86 "Financial Statement and Budget Report" and for a longer-term projection on specified assumptions, I refer the hon. Member to table A.10 of the Green Paper "The Next Ten Years: Public Expenditure and Taxation into the 1990s" (Cmnd 9189).

No forecasts of gas levy for future years are available. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy on 11 November.

WALES

Marine Nature Reserves

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many marine nature reserves are currently being considered for the Welsh coastline; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Three. The Nature Conservancy Council is consulting interested parties on proposals to establish reserves at Skomer and in the Menai straits. Proposals relating to Bardsley-Western Lleyn are less advanced.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Employment Equality

Mr. Beaumont-Dark asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made on the study which his predecessor announced on 3 July, *Official Report*, column 161, in relation to employment equality in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I hope shortly to receive a report from officials. I attach great importance to this matter and it would be my hope to publish proposals for discussion early in the new year.

TRANSPORT

Traffic Flows (B197)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his Department has had with Hertfordshire county council regarding traffic levels on the B197 between Welwyn and Stevenage; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: There have been no general discussions between the Department and the county council regarding traffic levels on the B197, for which the county council is the highway authority. By agreement with it, it is being used during roadworks on the A1(M) as a diversionary route to enable northbound traffic from Welwyn to join the motorway at Stevenage.

A11 (Barton Mills)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the number of vehicles expected to use the A11 south-east of Barton Mills roundabout in the years 1986, 1990 and 1995, respectively.

Mrs. Chalker: The figures requested, which are given below, are based on 1984 national road traffic forecasts and represent the annual average daily traffic flow (two-way) over a 24-hour period, for both low and high economic growth predictions:

	Low growth	*High growth*
1986	21,600	22,000
1990	22,600	24,000
1995	23,600	26,200

Fixed Channel Link

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if a full environmental impact assessment will be made of the various schemes submitted for a fixed cross-channel link; and if the scheme selected by the Government will be subject to a public inquiry.

Mr. David Mitchell: As part of their assessment of proposals for the channel fixed link, the Government are conducting a thorough appraisal of the environmental impact assessment submitted by the four promoters. The decision on whether to go ahead with any scheme selected must be taken by Parliament as a matter of national as well as local significance.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport how both low and intermediate level nuclear waste will be transported to any sites chosen as waste repositories; and what measures will be necessary in order to ensure that there are no possibilities of either radiation leakages or other accidents during transit.

Mrs. Chalker: As with all radioactive material in this country, the transport of low and intermediate level radioactive waste is subject to safety regulations based on the stringent and internationally agreed standards of the International Atomic Energy Agency. These require the design of the transport container to incorporate safety features appropriate to the nature and quantity of the material irrespective of the modes of transport or routes used and taking into account the possibility of severe accidents.

Disabled Persons (Parking Badges)

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to how many orange parking badges have been issued to date under the Disabled Persons (Badges for Motor Vehicles) Regulations 1982 and as to how many of these holders pay vehicle excise duty.

Mrs. Chalker: This information is not available centrally, as records of disabled persons' parking permits (orange badges) are not maintained other than by the local authorities that issue them.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the number of disabled persons' parking badges issued under section 21 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 prior to the introduction of new regulations in 1982 and as to the number of these whose holders pay or paid vehicle excise duty.

Mrs. Chalker: At the time of a survey in January 1983, (prior to the introduction of the current regulations), some 682,000 disabled persons' parking permits (orange badges) had been issued in Great Britain. No information is held centrally on the number of badge holders who pay or paid vehicle excise duty.

Manchester International Airport

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what contacts his Department has had with the Manchester international airport authority, British Rail

and other appropriate agencies concerning a rail link to the airport; what progress has been made; if he will outline what is proposed, giving the likely cost and time scale of providing a 1½ mile double track link; and when he expects to be able to make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Officials from my Department held preliminary discussions about this rail link with local interests in September. It is now for British Rail and the local authorities to come forward with a viable scheme. I look forward to receiving their proposals.

Stay Low Campaign

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the results of the evaluation of the stay low campaign which was conducted during the Christmas period 1984.

Mrs. Chalker: An assessment of levels of drinking and driving over the Christmas period 1984 will appear in "Road Accidents Great Britain," to be published later this month. Copies will be placed in the Library.

The assessment indicates that, compared with 1983, there was, over the Christmas period, an increase in the number of drivers failing the roadside breath test and an increase in casualties during the "drinking hours". However, both breath test results and casualties are open to a range of influences and to draw firm conclusions as to the part played by publicity in any particular year, as against other factors, would be wholly unjustified. Individual publicity campaigns are in any case part of our continuing programme to educate drivers and riders about the dangers of alcohol, the success of which can only be measured over a substantial period of time.

Caravans (Road Tax)

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to make caravans subject to road tax.

Mr. Moore: I have been asked to reply.

I have no present plans to do so.

EMPLOYMENT

Payment of Accounts

Mr. Paddy Ashdown asked the Paymaster General if *(a)* legislation or *(b)* a code of practice will be introduced in the next Session to facilitate the speedier payment of accounts by large concerns to small firms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: There are no plans for introducing legislation or a code of practice on this subject in the coming Session. I am currently discussing with a number of industry representative organisations the possibility of promoting good payment practices by means of co-operation between firms rather than by coercion. We expect to produce practical guidance on the subject for both customers and suppliers.

At this stage I do not consider a statement to be necessary.

Small Businesses

Mr. Ashdown asked the Paymaster General what steps have been taken in his Department to improve the reliable collection of data concerning the small business sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Department recognises the importance of reliable data concerning the small business sector. However, any special large-scale exercise to collect information would be expensive and would represent an additional burden on those who run small firms.

We are therefore considering what more can be done by using existing sources of data, both official and non-official. We intend to strike a balance between our need for better information and the need to avoid increasing the burdens on small businesses.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General (1) what is his estimate of the proportion of small businesses formed since 1979, which after *(a)* one year and *(b)* two years were or are employing 10 or more workers;

(2) what is his estimate of the average number of jobs that has been created by small businesses formed since 1979;

(3) if he will provide a regional breakdown of the number of jobs created by small businesses since 1979.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 November 1985, c. *54*]: I regret this information is not available. The Department's monitoring of small busineses is based on information collected for the routine administration of VAT which does not include details of the numbers employed by the business.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General what is his estimate of the proportion of small businesses formed since 1979 which were or are still trading after *(a)* one year and *(b)* two years.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 November 1985, c. *54*]: Our study of failure rates in each year following start up of a business (derived from the life span analysis of all-VAT registrations between January 1974 and December 1982) suggests that on average one in 10 of small firms will fail in the first year of their existence. The figure rises to just over one in five within two years.

Apprenticeships

Mr. Soames asked the Paymaster General what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of apprenticeships.

Mr. Trippier: Industry's skill requirements are changing, and apprenticeships are no longer the only route to full skills training. The level and nature of initial skills training is primarily a matter for employers. However, the Government are encouraging employers to make apprenticeship training more flexible, cost-effective and relevant to the needs of industry. In addition, the Government have provided support through the youth training scheme for the first year of recognised apprenticeship training and this support will be extended to two years when the new scheme is introduced in April 1986.

Black Economy

Mr. Colvin asked the Paymaster General if he will change the method of calculating the level of employment in the United Kingdom in order to take account of the black economy.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Department's estimates of the numbers in employment are intended to be comprehensive. While they may exclude some people who work in the black economy, it is not possible to count the number of these exclusions.

Labour Statistics

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General what was the seasonal fall in unemployment in October.

Mr. Alan Clark: A fall of about 40,000 in adult unemployed claimants was expected through normal seasonal influences in the month of October. The actual fall was 44,000, so the seasonally adjusted level of adult unemployment fell by some 4,000.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General how many part-time and full-time jobs there have been in Britain for each year since 1955.

Mr. Alan Clark: Table 1 shows the available annual figures for employees in employment.

Table 1—Employees in employment, Great Britain

Mid year: Thousand

	Males			*Females*		
	Full-time	*Part-time*	*All*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*All*
1959	—	—	13,824	—	—	7,159
1960	—	—	14,031	—	—	7,418
1961	—	—	14,202	—	—	7,586
1962	—	—	14,309	—	—	7,697
1963	—	—	14,330	—	—	7,731
1964	—	—	14,460	—	—	7,902
1965	—	—	14,565	—	—	8,055
1966	—	—	14,551	—	—	8,237
1967	—	—	14,214	—	—	8,133
1968	—	—	14,013	—	—	8,173
1969	—	—	13,891	—	—	8,257
1970	—	—	13,706	—	—	8,287
1971	12,840	584	13,424	5,467	2,757	8,224
1972	12,719	600	13,319	5,545	2,877	8,331
1973	12,813	665	13,478	5,542	3,163	8,705
1974	12,675	689	13,363	5,512	3,421	8,933
1975	12,542	697	13,240	5,422	3,551	8,973
1976	12,398	699	13,097	5,366	3,585	8,951
1977	12,395	681	13,076	5,433	3,617	9,050
1978	12,396	704	13,100	5,486	3,688	9,173
1979	—	—	13,183	5,585	3,870	9,455
1980	—	—	13,018	5,500	3,941	9,440
1981*	—	—	12,278	5,290	3,817	9,107
1982	—	—	11,945	5,121	3,861	8,982
1983	—	—	11,691	4,935	3,956	8,892
1984	—	—	11,595	4,944	4,161	9,105
1985	—	—	11,525	4,974	4,336	9,309

* In September 1981 there were 12,229,000 male employees of whom 11,511,000 were engaged full-time and 9,085,000 females of whom 5,304,000 worked full-time.

Sources:
1971 to 1978—Census of Employment.
Other years—Quarterly employment series.

Figures for recent years from the labour force survey which provide a breakdown between full-time and part-time employment are given in table 2.

Table 2—Employees in employment, Great Britain*

Spring: Thousand

	Males			*Females*		
	Full-time	*Part-time*	*All*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*All*
1979	12,892	277	13,169	5,317	3,705	9,022
1981	11,628	407	12,200	5,102	3,774	8,967
1983	11,262	362	11,648	4,959	3,596	8,714
1984	11,197	452	11,658	5,016	3,959	8,980

* An employee is shown as full-time or part-time according to whether he (or she) considers his job as a full-time or part-time one.

Estimates for all in employment from the census of population for 1961 and 1966 are given in table 3. There are some definitional differences between the two censuses of population.

Table 3—All in employment, Great Britain*

	Mid year: Thousand					
	Males			Females		
	Full-time	Part-time	All	Full-time	Part-time	All
1961	15,575	174	15,749	5,698	1,892	7,590
1966	15,201	373	15,574	5,847	2,748	8,595

Source: Census of Population
* Includes employees in employment and self employed.

Youth Training

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General what information he has on the age of black and white trainees on youth training schemes.

Mr. Trippier: Information is available on the age of young people joining the youth training scheme but it is not further broken down by ethnic groups.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will give, from the most recent survey of youth training scheme providers, the number and proportion of trainees on mode A, mode B1 and mode B2 schemes, respectively, who will spend fewer than 13 weeks on off-the-job training.

Mr. Trippier: There has been no further survey of training providers since that referred to by my hon. Friend the former Minister of State for Employment in his reply to the hon. Member on 8 May 1985 at column 432. The details given in that reply, therefore, remain the most current available.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what are the current numbers of vacant places on the youth training schemes.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that the information is not available in the precise form requested. However, at the end of September 1985 some 377,000 youth training scheme places had been approved in the current financial year, while there were around 317,000 young people in training. It is not possible to give a precise figure of vacant places because not all approved places will actually be available for occupation.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General how many young people entered the youth training scheme in 1985; and how many places they occupied.

Mr. Trippier: In the period January to September 1985 there were 304,000 entrants to the youth training scheme. A number of these entrants will have joined more than one scheme and it is not possible to say how many places they actually occupied. However, at the end of September 1985 there were more than 317,000 young people in training on the scheme (this figure includes some young people who joined the scheme before January 1985).

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what measures have been taken in the last six months to reduce the under-occupancy of mode A youth training scheme places.

Mr. Trippier: Area offices of the Manpower Services Commission have made strenuous efforts in negotiation with providers to ensure that the number of mode A places available is closely related to the anticipated needs of young people. In addition they, and careers offices, have been reminded that where there is a choice of suitable places, young people should be submitted in preference to mode A. The result of this action has been an increase in occupancy on mode A schemes from 72 per cent. at the end of September 1984 to 83 per cent. at the same time this year.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General how many young people in training on the youth training scheme are estimated to be employees on current year schemes; how these figures compare with the previous year; and what the anticipated figures are for the two-year scheme.

Mr. Trippier: Between April 1985 and September 1985 there were over 286,000 entrants to the youth training scheme of which some 12,000 (4 per cent.) had employee status on joining. These figures compare with around 236,000 entrants to the scheme during the same period last year approximately 8,500 (4 per cent.) of whom had employee status on joining. No figures are kept on those youngsters who gain employee status after joining the scheme.

It will not be possible for some time to say how many entrants to the new two-year youth training scheme will have employee status.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will publish, for each area office of the Manpower Services Commission, current accident figures for the youth training scheme in the following form *(a)* for the area for each of the last three available months, *(b)* by travel-to-work area for the last available month, *(c)* by parliamentary constituency for the last available month and *(d)* by local authority for the last available month.

Mr. Trippier: Youth training scheme accident statistics are collected quarterly and they relate to Manpower Services Commission training division areas. Comprehensive information is not readily available for all parliamentary constituencies, travel-to-work areas or local authority districts and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

The latest figures for each area office are provided in the table below:

*Youth training scheme accidents 1 July 1985-30 September 1985**

Region	*Area*	*Fatalities*	*Major injuries†*	*Minor injuries*
Scotland	Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	7
	Central and Fife	—	2	5
	Glasgow city	—	1	9
	Grampian and Tayside	—	3	7
	Highlands and Islands	—	—	2
	Lanarkshire	—	3	11
	Lothian/Borders	—	1	4
	Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	—	1	7
Northern	Cleveland	—	—	14
	Durham County	—	3	18
	Newcastle	—	1	15
	South Tyne	—	2	16
Yorkshire and Humberside	Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees	—	1	12
	Humberside	—	1	3
	Leeds/North Yorkshire	—	1	14
	Sheffield/Rotheram	—	3	8
	Wakefield, Barnsley, Doncaster	—	1	7
North West	Cheshire	—	3	9
	Cumbria	—	—	1
	Greater Manchester Central	‡1	—	5
	Greater Manchester East	—	—	—
	Greater Manchester North	—	2	28
	Lancashire	1	2	14
	Merseyside Inner	—	2	10
	Merseyside Outer	—	1	15
Midlands	Birmingham	—	2	14
	Coventry	—	1	2
	Derby	—	1	18
	Dudley/Sandwell	—	—	5
	Leicestershire	—	2	3
	Lincoln	—	—	10
	Nottingham	—	1	9
	Staffordshire	—	—	7
	Telford/Shropshire/Herefordshire and Worcester	—	—	5
	Wolverhampton/Walsall	—	2	7
Wales	Cardiff	—	4	18
	Gwent	—	—	4
	Swansea	—	1	10
	Wrexham	—	—	6
South West	Avon	—	—	6
	Devon and Cornwall	—	—	—
	Gloucester and Wiltshire	—	2	9
	Taunton/Somerset/Dorset	—	—	5
South East	Chatham Kent	—	—	2
	Chelmsford	—	1	4
	Fareham	—	1	8
	High Wycombe	—	1	4
	Horsham	—	1	6
	Ipswich	—	2	3
	Luton	—	1	14
	Reading	—	—	5
London	London North	—	1	4
	London North East	—	—	7
	London South East	—	1	1
	London South and West	—	—	5
Totals		2	59	442

* Manpower Services Commission accident figures for the Youth Training Scheme are compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive on employed persons. However, Commission figures will include a number of accidents, in particular road traffic accidents during scheme time and accidents to trainees in educational establishments, which may not have been reportable to the Executive had the individuals been employed.

† Major injuries are classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980.

‡ Road traffic accident.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the 1985 incidence of major and fatal accidents to trainees on the youth training scheme, together with the figures for each of the last two years.

Mr. Trippier: The following table sets out the annual incidence rates per 100,000 trainees on the youth training scheme, separately for major and fatal accidents, for 1983-84 and 1984-85 calculated on the basis of the average number of trainees in training.

Period	*Average number in training*	**Accidents*		*Annual incidence rate per 100,000 trainees*	
		Fatalities	*†Major injuries*	*Fatalities*	*Major injuries*
1 April 1983 to 31 March 1984	161,500	‡4	100	2·5	61·9
1 April 1984 to 31 March 1985	282,408	‖5	184	1·8	65·2

* Manpower Services Commission accident figures for the youth training scheme are compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive on employed persons. However, Commission figures will include a number of accidents, in particular road traffic accidents during scheme time and accidents to trainees in educational establishments, which may not have been reportable to the executive had the individuals been employed.

† Major injuries are classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurences Regulations 1980.

‡ This figure includes one road traffic accident.

‖ This figure includes two road traffic accidents.

Community Programme

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will give, on the basis of the second community programme "follow-up" survey of past participants, for both sexes by both eligibility standard grouping, the proportion who had found employment at the time of the survey, all according to the three standard age ranges of the entrants, under 25, 25 to 44, and 45-plus years.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall be placing a summary of the main results of the second community programme "follow-up" survey of past participants in the Library of the House within the next three weeks. I shall then write to the hon. Member setting out the information he requests.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate by reference to the most up-to-date statistics the chance that someone on the unemployment register will gain employment within a year, according to sex, and by the standard age categories, under-18, 18 to 24, 25 to 44 45-plus years, and by standard duration of unemployment groupings; and if he will estimate the influence of the community programme on each of the given proportions.

Mr. Alan Clark: Figures are not available in the form requested. However, broad estimates indicate that about four in five of people becoming unemployed leave the claimant register within a year.

Young Persons

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will publish for each Manpower Services Commission area office and for *(a)* 16-year-olds, *(b)* 17-year-olds and *(c)* 18-year-olds the latest careers service estimates of the number and proportion expected to leave school and further education college, and the number and proportion expected to find work outside the youth training scheme by 31 December.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Adult Training

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the progress of adult training strategy.

Mr. Trippier: In addition to pursuing the adult training campaign and measures to improve the operation of the training market, we have made good progress in making our adult training programmes more relevant to current and future skill needs. In order to develop the job creation potential of small firms and enterprise, we have now asked the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission for proposals to focus adult training programmes more sharply on the needs of small firms, on promoting enterprise and self-employment and to further promote and exploit the advantages of open learning.

Businesses (EC Regulations)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the 40 regulations he is taking up with the EEC on the basis that they make life difficult for business in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: The Government have made no formal proposals to the European Economic Community on deregulation.

The list of regulations referred to in the White Paper "Lifting the Burden" (Cmnd. 9571) was a working paper designed to help the Commission in its work on deregulation. The Government's approach on deregulation is set out in the White Paper.

Asbestos

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General what is the maximum permitted level of airborne asbestos in public open areas adjacent to sites from where it is being removed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is no permitted maximum level. Persons who conduct such work are required to ensure that levels of airborne asbestos are kept to the lowest level that is reasonably practicable.

Disabled Persons

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Paymaster General what conclusions have been reached on recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the quota scheme for the employment of disabled people.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have considered carefully the Manpower Services Commission's advice and the report of the working group it set up to consider ways of improving the effectiveness of the scheme within the framework of exisiting legislation. The report of working group, which comprised representatives of the interested parties, makes it clear that without further information, in particular about the potential for encouraging more disabled people to register, it will be difficult to decide how effective our quota scheme might be and what should be the appropriate level of public resources allocated to it. It will also be difficult to settle questions such as how far compliance by employers with the duty to employ the 3 per cent. quota is possible and what resource should be devoted to it.

The working group recommended further research into the size of the disabled working population and its characteristics. The Government welcome and have accepted this recommendation.

Because the quota scheme remains in force it is important to promote greater awareness of both its potential for disabled people and the responsibility of employers. The Government welcome and accept the working group's recommendation for the involvement of all interested parties in this task.

Without further information it is not possible to judge how far the working group's recommendations for tightening up enforcement of and compliance with the scheme will be effective and whether the increased staff and expenditure needed would represent the best use of resources available. We will consider these recommendations further when the results of the research are known.

I have today written to the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission outlining the Government's decision and have asked officials to take forward the accepted recommendations as quickly as possible.

My right hon. Friends and I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who served on the commission's working group and were involved in producing its valuable report.

DEFENCE

Trident Missile

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the British designed and built warhead for the Trident missile will be tested; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my predecessor, the right hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Butler), on 24 May 1985 at column *600*.

Pensions

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what effect the proposed changes in the state earnings-related pension scheme would have on the armed forces pension scheme: by how much, and what percentage, pensions for ranks, below lance corporal, corporal, sergeant, staff sergeant, warrant officer, captain, major, lieutenant-colonel, colonel and brigadier would be changed under these proposals; and what are the current rates of pension per annum, lump sums payable to widows on death, family pensions and war pensions for the above ranks.

Mr. Stanley: The Government are still considering the response to their social security Green Paper proposals including those on pensions.

The rate of pension varies according to the length of reckonable service given. The current minimum and maximum rates per annum for the ranks quoted are:

	Minimum	*Maximum*
Below Lance corporal	2,399	3,656
Corporal	3,044	4,638
Sergeant	3,357	5,114
Staff sergeant	3,811	5,806
Warrant officer II	3,918	6,005
Warrant officer I	4,299	6,630
Captain	4,044	7,408
Major	4,838	8,977
Lieutenant-colonel	6,160	11,291
Colonel	7,805	13,093
Brigadier	10,339	14,259

The level of benefits paid to widows depends on their husband's rank, length of service, date of retirement and whether or not the death is attributable to service. The current rates of benefit where death is attributable to service are:

Husbands Rank	*Lump Sums Payable to Widow on Death*			*Forces Family Pension§*		*DHSS War Pension†‡*		
	Death Grant†		*Additional attributable gratuity†*	*Widow*	*Children (per child—max of 4)*	*Widow under 40 and with no children*	*Widow over 40 or with children*	*Children (per child—no max)*
	Min* £	Max* £	£	£ pa	£ pa	£ pa	£ pa	£ pa
Below Cpl	7,312	10,968	1,828	2,730	731	560	2,427	576
Cpl	9,276	13,914	2,319	3,614	928	560	2,427	576
Sgt	10,288	15,342	2,557	4,042	1,023	560	2,427	576
S/Sgt	11,612	17,418	2,903	4,665	1,161	560	2,427	576
WOII	12,010	18,015	3,003	4,844	1,201	560	2,427	576
WOI	13,260	19,890	3,315	5,406	1,326	560	2,427	576
Capt and below	14,816	22,224	3,704	6,107	1,482	560	2,427	576
Major	17,954	26,931	4,489	7,519	1,795	560	2,427	576

Husbands Rank	Lump Sums Payable to Widow on Death: Death Grant†		Additional attributable gratuity†	Forces Family Pension‡: Widow	Children (per child—max of 4)	DHSS War Pension*†‡: Widow under 40 and with no children	Widow over 40 or with children	Children (per child—no max)
Lt Col	22,582	33,873	5,646	9,601	2,258	560	2,427	576
Col	26,186	39,279	6,547	11,223	2,619	560	2,427	576
Brig	28,518	42,777	7,130	12,273	2,852	560	2,427	576

* The grant rises above the minimum when the length of service exceeds 18 years, and increases according to length of service thereafter.
† Tax free
‡ Index linked

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost of pensions to his Department in the financial years 1978-79 to 1985-86; and what is the projected cost in 1985-86 to 1987-88, 1988-89 to 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and 2000-2001.

Mr. Stanley: The total cost of pensions to the Ministry of Defence in the financial years 1978-79 to 1985-86 was as follows:

Year	£ million
1978-79	432
1979-80	459
1980-81	503
1981-82	624
1982-83	680
1983-84	777
1984-85	828
*1985-86	906

* Estimated.

The cost cannot reliably be calculated for later years.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of the total defence budget was taken by pension payments in 1978-79 and 1984-85; and what percentage is planned to be taken in 1985-86, 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89 and each year until 2000-2001.

Mr. Stanley: Pension payments took up 5·8 per cent. of the defence budget in 1978-79 and 4·8 per cent. in 1984-85. The estimated figure for 1985-86 is 5·0 per cent. The percentage cannot be reliably calculated for later years.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to change the present system of service pensions.

Mr. Stanley: There are no plans at present for significant change to the present system. Minor adjustments of detail are of course made from time to time in order to adapt to changing circumstances.

Service Personnel (Bomb Injuries)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps have been taken or are proposed with regard to financial support for those service men injured in the Hyde park and Regent's park bombings in July 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: All the service men who were invalided from the Army as a result of injuries received in the Hyde park and Regent's park bombings have received either a pension or a lump sum or both from the Ministry of Defence under the armed forces pension scheme and also either a pension or a lump sum from the Department of Health and Social Security under its war pensions scheme. The level of these benefits, which are tax-free, depends on degree of disability.

These service men are also entitled to apply for compensation under the criminal injuries compensation scheme. I understand that the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board received applications from 46 service men, that 28 cases have been finalised and that interim awards have been made in the remainder. My Department is ready to give all possible assistance to the injured service men in pursuing their applications to the board, and has been doing so in those cases where our assistance has been requested.

Service Children

Sir Antony Buck asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to abolish parental contributions made by members of Her Majesty's armed forces serving overseas towards the cost of their children's holiday visits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: A major grievance identified among Service personnel is the present requirement for those serving abroad to contribute up to 3 per cent. of their salary towards the cost of the third visit each year by their children from a boarding school in the United Kingdom. I am pleased to say that, as my noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Support announced in another place on 7 November, the Government have decided to abolish this requirement for a parental contribution. This will allow Christmas visits at public expense this year and will, I know, be very welcome news to the armed forces. It demonstrates once again the Government's firm support for them. We are continuing to pay close attention to all conditions of service, and we shall introduce further changes when justified.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Diplomatic Staff (Independent Schools)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many children of diplomatic staff were both educated and boarded at independent schools whilst being financed by the diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested for the diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office including communications department staff is set out in the table:

Year	Number of children
1978-79 as at March 1979	1,748
1979-80 as at November 1979	1,681
1982-83 as at March 1983	1,491
1983-84 as at March 1984	1,368
1984-85 as at March 1985	1,336
1985-86 as at September 1985	1,349

Figures for 1980 to 1981 and 1981 to 1982 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to obtain from the Swedish Government the full text of the report handed to the Swedish ambassador by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1957 of the alleged death of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The full text of the report handed to the Swedish ambassador by the then Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Gromyko, was made public by the Swedish Government in 1957. I am sending a copy to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed the case of Raoul Wallenberg with the Swedish Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I discussed the case of Raoul Wallenberg with the Swedish ambassador in London when we visited the Wallenberg exhibition in London together in 1982. British officials have subsequently kept in close contact with the Swedish embassy and Ministry of Foreign Affairs on this matter, and we have made clear our willingness to assist the Swedes in their efforts to establish more clearly Mr. Wallenberg's fate. We have also raised the case on a number of occasions with the Soviet authorities. I did so most recently when I met Mr. Kornienko in July.

Third World Exports (Price Stabilisation)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all schemes in which the United Kingdom is involved regarding the stabilisation of prices of exports from Third world countries.

Mr. Rifkind: The United Kingdom is a member of four international commodity agreements with economic provisions for achieving price stabilisation. These are: 1979 international natural rubber agreement; 1980 international cocoa agreement; 1981 international tin agreement; and 1983 international coffee agreement.

Pedro Fernandez Lembach

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Chilean Government to seek the release of Pedro Fernandez Lembach from jail.

Mr. Eggar: As he is a Chilean national we have no formal consular standing to intervene on Sr. Fernandez Lembach's behalf. But we regularly remind the Chilean authorities, most recently on 10 October, of our willingness to grant him entry to the United Kingdom should his sentence be commuted to exile.

Arms Sales (Israel)

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is prepared to consider requests for sales by United Kingdom companies of weapons and military equipment to Israel; and if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy in this regard.

Mr. Rifkind: Restrictions on the sale of weapons and military equipment to Israel were imposed in June 1982 in direct response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. We welcomed the Israeli Unity Government's decision to withdraw but have been disappointed by the continued residual presence of Israeli forces in South Lebanon. Our policy is kept under review.

Chile

Viscount Cranborne asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken in light of the publication on 25 August, by a broad grouping of Chilean democratic opposition parties, of the national agreement for the transition to full democracy.

Mr. Eggar: We welcome the opportunity provided by this "National Accord" for Chile to make progress towards the restoration of a full and genuine democracy, and have joined in the declaration in support of this accord made by Foreign Ministers of the Ten on 10 September.

Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust

Viscount Cranborne asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the future of the Irish sailors and soldiers land trust.

Mr. Eggar: In response to proposals by the trustees of the Irish sailors and soldiers land trust for the future of the trust, and following discussions with the Government of the Irish Republic, we propose to intoduce a Bill in the present Session of Parliament to enable the trust to return moneys surplus to its requirements to the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland Governments. The Bill would also provide powers for the trust to wind itself up on receipt of a directive to that effect given by my right hon. and learned Friend with the agreement of the Irish Government. The directive would set out the arrangments made between the two Governments for the management and disposal of the trust's assets.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Sub-Saharan Africa

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department will be making any contribution to the international fund for agricultural development's special fund for sub-Saharan Africa to help increase food production.

Mr. Raison: My Department will consider whether to contribute to IFAD's new, voluntary special programme for African countries when IFAD's second replenishment is in place. We have our own very effective bilateral aid programme, however, and any additional contribution to IFAD would inevitably leave us with less money for that.

STABEX Scheme

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for the revised STABEX scheme under Lomé III *(a)* the agricultural products covered, *(b)* the countries involved, and *(c)* the thresholds for each product and for each agricultural product under Lomé II, the take-up for each country and the overall percentage take-up.

Mr. Raison: The full list of 48 products covered by the Lomé III Stabex scheme is set out in article 148 of the convention, the text of which has been published in Cmnd. 9511.

All 66 African, Caribbean and Pacific signatories to the third Lomé convention are potentially eligible to receive Stabex transfers.

For an ACP state other than the least developed, landlocked and island states (listed in articles 257, 260 and 263 respectively) the Stabex system applies to any eligible product if, during the year preceding the year of application, export earnings from that product to all destinations represented at least 6 per cent. (or in the case of sisal 4½ per cent.) of total export earnings. For the least developed, landlocked and island states the system applies if export earnings from the product represented at least 1½ per cent.

An ACP state is entitled to request a transfer if, on the basis of the results of one calendar year, its actual earnings from its exports of each product to the Community (or, in certain cases where derogations have been given, to other ACP states in addition, or in certain other cases to all destinations) are at least 6 per cent. below the reference level as defined in article 158. For the least developed, landlocked and island states that percentage is reduced to 1½ per cent.

I shall write to the hon. Member giving details of Lomé II Stabex allocations. By the end of 1984 transfer decisions had been made totalling 463,134,391 ecu (73 per cent. of Stabex funds available under Lomé II)—£264 million approximately.

Central America

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the recently agreed 40 million European currency units aid co-operation agreement with central American countries; what criteria will be used in deciding on its allocation with central America; and what role is envisaged for the voluntary agencies in distributing the aid.

Mr. Raison: Foreign Ministers of the European Community and the central American countries met in Luxembourg on 11-12 November to sign an agreement strengthening the economic links between the two regions. A copy of the draft agreement was deposited with the Scrutiny Committee on 7 November and a copy is available in the Library of the House of Commons.

The draft agreement covers a range of subjects including trade, investment and economic co-operation. No sum is specified for the aid element, but an annex to the draft agreement proposes a substantial increase.

At the meeting the Community, Spain and Portugal confirmed their intention to give assistance to projects of regional importance on the basis of priorities and objectives identified by common agreement.

No new role is specified for the voluntary agencies in this agreement. The Community has, however, a programme of development assistance channelled through voluntary agencies, a number of which are working in the central American region.

SCOTLAND

Island Councils (Expenditure)

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy not to penalise Orkney Islands council and Shetland Islands council in respect of any expenditure in excess of his prescribed limits which is attributable to costs incurred in connection with the public inquiry into the proposed reprocessing plant at Dounreay.

Mr. Ancram: It is for local authorities to determine their own expenditure priorities within the resources available to them. For the purposes of calculating grant penalties for spending over guideline I disregard items of expenditure only in exceptional circumstances and I do not consider that expenses in connection with public inquiries fall into this category.

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make an appropriate adjustment in the rate support grant to Orkney Islands council and Shetland Islands council to cover expenditure incurred by local authorities in making such objections and representations as they see fit, to the public inquiry on the proposed reprocessing plant at Dounreay.

Mr. Ancram: No. Rate support grant is payable in support of local authorities' revenues generally and not in relation to individual items of expenditure.

Dounreay Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will arrange for sufficient copies of the environmental impact assessment on the proposed Dounreay reprocessing plant to be sent to Orkney Islands council and Shetland Islands council for display in all public libraries, including mobile libraries, in the islands areas.

Mr. Ancram: Copies of the applicants' environmental impact assessment will shortly be made available, together with other relevant documents, for public inspection within normal office hours at the following places:—

Thurso:
District council offices and public library.
Wick:
District council offices and public library.
Inverness:
Regional council offices, Glenurquart road and public library.
Stornoway:
Islands council offices and public library.
Lerwick:
Islands council offices, Victoria buildings and public library.
Kirkwall:
Islands council offices, School place and public library.
Stromness:
Public library.
Edinburgh:
Scottish Office, New St. Andrew's House.

I understand that further copies are obtainable from the applicants, on request to Risley nuclear power development establishment, United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Risley, Warrington, Cheshire WA3 6AT

THE ARTS

South Bank Concert Hall

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts if, in the light of circular No. 9 issued by the London and metropolitan government staff commission on 11 October, he will instruct the Arts Council further to consider designating staff of the Greater London council currently working at or in support of the South Bank concert hall.

Mr. Luce: It is not intended to transfer any staff working at, or in support of, the South Bank concert halls to the Arts Council by order. During its recruitment of staff, however, the Arts Council will continue to adhere to the rules which have been laid down by the London and metropolitan government staff commission to take account of the interests of Greater London and metropolitan county council employees.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Elderly Persons (Rehabilitation)

14. **Mr. Carter-Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give additional support to the expansion of rehabilitation services for the elderly.

Mr. Whitney: The central objective of our policies for elderly people is to enable as many as possible to lead independent lives at home. Services to cope with the effects of disability and increasing frailty are growing steadily. It is our intention to ensure that this record of improvement continues.

Nurse Staffing Levels

15. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with nurse staffing levels in National Health Service hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am generally satisfied with the nurse staffing levels in National Health Service hospitals. Between 1979 and 1984 NHS hospital nursing staff increased from 319,000 to 350,000.

Hospital Buildings (Crown Immunity)

16. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on the effects of Crown immunity on standards in hospital buildings.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is our policy that health authorities should not use Crown immunity as an excuse for deferring or postponing necessary action. We are looking urgently at the need for further action in the light of evidence suggesting this policy is not always followed.

AIDS (Blood Transfusions)

17. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what screening tests are taken in the National Health Service for blood transfusion to detect if donors are suffering from acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Hayhoe: Since 14 October this year all blood donations collected by the national blood transfusion service have been tested for antibody to HTLV III, the AIDS virus. The two commercial tests currently being used are made by Wellcome Diagnostics and Organon Teknika Limited.

Housing Benefit

18. **Mr. Andrew Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken to ensure that proposed changes to the structure of housing benefit do not adversely affect pensioner households.

Mr. Newton: In looking for a fairer, simpler housing benefit scheme we are of course considering very carefully the effects on pensioners and all other households affected.

SERPS

19. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his plans for the state earnings-related pension scheme.

Mr. Newton: Our proposals for the future of the state earnings-related pension scheme will be published soon in a White Paper.

Community Nurses

20. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to extend the role of nurses in the community.

Mr. Hayhoe: I await the report of the review team into community nursing before considering any such plans.

Drug Advisory Committees

21. **Mr. Rathbone** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many drug advisory councils have been established; and if he will make a statement on their operation.

Mr. Whitney: "Drug Misuse: Prevalence and Service Provision", published by the Department in June, reported that eight regional health authorities and about 150 district health authorities had already set up multi-agency drug advisory committees. Regional health authorities have been advised that there should by the end of 1985 be a drug advisory committee for every health district. Drug advisory committees should monitor the extent of problem drug taking, assess the effectiveness of existing services and foster their improvement. Health authorities share the Government's concern that urgent action should be taken in this field.

London (Hospital Waiting Lists)

22. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why there has been an increase in hospital waiting lists in inner London.

Mr. Whitney: Changes in the total numbers of people on hospital waiting lists occur for many different reasons. The latest available figures show increases in 20 London health authorities and decreases in 11, with a similar pattern in what might be termed "Inner London" districts. Overall, London experienced a small percentage increase in the number of people waiting for admission to hospital between September 1984 and last March—including an increase of 39 in the number of urgent cases. Hon.

Members will remember that we had a particularly hard winter here in London which of course led to increased pressure on hospital services, and may have affected some waiting lists. But the important fact is that levels of NHS activity in London have never been higher, as indeed is the case for the country as a whole.

AIDS

23. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to increase the resources devoted to combating the spread of acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Hayhoe: I hope to make an announcement on resources shortly.

51. **Mr. Sims** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the measures taken to seek to prevent the spread of acquired immune deficiency syndrome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I announced on 26 September details of additional measures being taken in the fight against AIDS and a copy of the press notice is in the Library. With the help of the Department's expert advisory group on AIDS I am considering what further measures should be taken to combat the spread of this disease.

Child Benefit

24. **Mr. Squire** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he proposes to maintain the real value of child benefit.

42. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the future of child benefit.

Mr. Newton: The Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9518) made it clear that there are no plans to change the basis or structure of child benefit. It will remain a universal benefit paid for children, payable primarily to mothers, not means tested and tax free. Its level will be determined by uprating, according to all the circumstances at the appropriate time, including in particular the pattern of family support as a whole and the needs of families on low incomes.

45. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many families have been disallowed child benefit for children over the age of 16 years because they are educating them at home; and whether he has any plans to change this position.

Mr. Major: The figures requested are not available although the numbers are thought to be small. Child benefit may be payable for a child over 16, when the child is not attending a recognised educational establishment, if the special educational arrangements have been authorised by the local authority. There are no plans to change these requirements.

Christmas Bonus

25. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider increasing the Christmas bonus for retirement pensioners.

Mr. Major: We have no present plans to do so.

Board and Lodging Regulations

26. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, if he will make a statement on his intentions regarding board and lodging regulations.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services in the House yesterday.

Board and Lodging Allowance

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were claiming board and lodging allowances in Lothian region up to last April; how many are now claiming this allowance; and how many are now claiming alternative allowances for the same or similar accommodation which is now on a form of bed-sit lease.

Mr. Newton: This information is not available.

Social Fund

27. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has had on the social fund proposed in the Green Paper on the review of the social security system.

Mr. Newton: The most recent written representations have been those of the social security advisory committee, which welcomed the idea of the fund as an imaginative idea and made a number of more detailed comments which we are considering.

NHS Facilities (Crown Immunity)

28. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to seek to remove Crown immunity as it affects National Health Service facilities.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have no immediate plans to seek the removal of Crown immunity from the Health Service, but I am considering this matter in respect of the food hygiene regulations.

"Community Care"

29. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the Government's response to the Social Services Committee's report entitled "Community Care".

Mr. Hayhoe: The Government's response will be published and laid before the House as soon as possible.

Contraception

30. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement regarding his Department's guidelines for the prescribing of contraceptives to girls under 16 years of age following the recent Law Lords' decision concerning Mrs. Victoria Gillick.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway).

Disregards

31. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will increase the level of disregard in respect of all social security payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: In the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9518) we have proposed that the earnings disregard under income support should generally be increased to £5, and to £15 for certain groups; and that the overall capital disregard should be increased to £6,000, with a tariff income being applied to capital between £3,000 and £6,000.

Disregards relating to other benefits are kept under regular review and appropriate increases will come into force at the general uprating of benefits later this month.

Students (Benefits)

32. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the future position with regard to students claiming social security benefits during the long vacation.

Mr. Newton: Our objective, as the Green Paper said, is for students to be helped through the grant system, by their families and by their own earnings in vacations. We are continuing to consider how best to move towards this objective.

Benefits

33. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is now in a position to give figures indicating how many present claimants would be in receipt of *(a)* higher and *(b)* lower benefits as a result of his social security review.

Mr. Newton: We will publish a range of illustrative figures shortly, with the White Paper.

Supplementary Benefit

34. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will now withdraw the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations (S.I. 1985, No. 613).

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the announcement made in the House yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

49. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are currently in receipt of supplementary benefit in the city of Coventry; and how this compares with 1979.

Mr. Major: The city of Coventry is covered by two offices of the Department, Coventry east and Coventry west, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the city of Coventry. The total number of persons in receipt of supplementary benefit on 30 July 1985 (the latest figures available), and 25 December 1979—the earliest figures available for that year—were:

	Coventry East	*Coventry West*
30 July 1985	22,795	18,527
25 December 1979	12,078	9,876

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped People

35. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will increase resources to enable local authorities to undertake in a more effective manner, their statutory responsibilities towards mentally ill and mentally handicapped people living in the community.

Mr. Hayhoe: Local authorities decide their spending priorities in the light of their local circumstances. Authorities are expected to give priority to fulfilling their statutory obligations, including those towards mentally ill and mentally handicapped people. In 1983-84, estimated gross expenditure on personal social services for mentally ill and mentally handicapped people respectively was £36 million and £219 million — increase over 1978-79 expenditure of 42 per cent. and 46 per cent. in real terms.

Limited List Prescribing

36. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now implement an appeal procedure for use in connection with the limited list of drugs.

Mr. Hayhoe: In July this year, the general medical services committee of the British Medical Association, on the advice of a conference of local medical committees, rejected the Government's proposals for a local appeal mechanism made in response to requests from the medical profession. Experience of the operation of the selected list scheme suggests that it is generally working well without an appeal mechanism.

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the latest alterations to the list of ethical and proprietary medicines which are no longer prescribable on the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: The National Health Service (General Medical and Pharmaceutical Services) Amendment (No. 6) Regulations 1985 were laid on Friday 8 November. These represent the only changes of substance made since 1 April 1985 to the schedule of medicines not prescribable on the National Health Service.

Social Security Reform

37. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish a Bill on the reform of social security.

40. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the review of social security.

Mr. Newton: Our final proposals will be published shortly in a White Paper and a Bill to give them effect will subsequently be introduced during the present Session.

Social Security Review

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish details of the representations made to him in consequence of the social security review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received during the consultation period on the Green Paper, "Reform of Social Security."

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) earlier today.

Mobility Allowance

38. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he proposes to make any changes in the regulations regarding mobility allowances.

46. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he proposes to introduce any changes to regulations on the mobility allowance.

Mr. Newton: We have no present plans to do so.

St. James' Hospital, Wandsworth

39. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions he has had with the members of the Wandsworth health authority as to the future of St. James' hospital, Wandsworth SW18; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: None.

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1968

41. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent steps he has taken to ensure the full implementation of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1968.

50. **Mr. Alfred Morris** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the relevant local authorities have adequate financial support from the Government to ensure full implementation of the provisions of section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act.

Mr. Newton: Implementation of the Act rests with local authorities, who are in the best position to assess local needs and to decide the most appropriate arrangements for meeting them. We do not allocate resources to specific personal social services, but expect local authorities to fulfil their statutory obligations including those under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act. We believe that local authorities fully recognise and seek to discharge that responsibility.

Pressure Cushions

43. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what types of pressure cushions, designed to give relief to paraplegics, are available to National Health patients.

Mr. Newton: A wide range of pressure-relieving cushions is available for paraplegics and others. Such cushions may be required for treatment or comfort, and may be supplied either by health authorities or local authority social services departments. In addition the Department supplies a range of such cushions for use in wheelchairs issued through artificial limb and appliance centres. This range includes cushions filled with polyurethane or latex foam, gel air or combinations of these, covered in vinyl, sheepskin or other materials.

Cervical Screening

44. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the cervical screening programme and the prospects of improving its coverage in the next financial year.

Mr. Hayhoe: In April we asked all health authorities in England to review the organisation and effectiveness of their cervical cancer screening programmes, and to introduce computerised systems to identify, call and recall women at risk. As these systems are brought into operation they should significantly improve coverage. Suggestions on further improvements to practical arrangements for screening, including coverage, are being discussed with the medical profession. A consultative paper will be issued shortly.

Privatisation

47. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken to seek to ensure that health authorities permit private contractors to compete on equal terms for contracts put out to tender.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Department's circular on competitive tendering HC(83)18 (a copy of which is in the Library) makes it clear that in-house or private contractors have to submit tenders to meet the same specifications, and provides a framework for a fair comparison of costs between tenders received.

Barnet Health Authority

48. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the consequences of the implementation of the resources allocation working party formula, with particular reference to the annual financial allocations to the Barnet health authority via the North-West Thames regional health authority.

Mr. Hayhoe: Generally, yes and the North-West Thames regional health authority is, of course, responsible for the distribution of resources to its district health authorities. I understand that the region has replaced sub-regional resources allocation working party by a different approach, albeit one based on the same principle of moving towards a fairer distribution of resources between districts and services in line with the impact on individual districts of the authorities' strategic aims for the development of patient services. My hon. Friend may wish to approach the regional health authority for full information about the method used.

Cold Climate Allowance

52. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he proposes to amend the regulations for qualification for the cold climate allowance.

Mr. Newton: There is no provision at present for a cold climate allowance, and we have no plans to introduce one. The hon. Member may be referring to single payments for fuel costs in periods of exceptionally severe weather, and I refer him to my reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 11 November at columns *95-97*.

53. **Mr. Donald Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has made a decision on payment of cold weather allowances for the winter of 1985-86.

Mr. Newton: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 11 November at columns *95-97*.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has given further consideration to the representations made for a cold climate allowance to those areas of Scotland which are adversely affected by severe weather conditions.

Mr. Newton: We have given careful consideration to the representations made for a cold climate allowance. But, like previous Governments, we remain of the view that it would not be right to deviate from the principle of national benefit levels.

Dental Amalgam

54. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many suppliers of traditional dental amalgam serve the National Health Service; and how many now supply tooth coloured resin replacements.

Mr. Hayhoe: Information about the number of suppliers of filling materials is not available. There are 21 manufacturers of dental amalgam products approved for use in the general dental service. I understand that there are approximately 17 manufacturers of tooth coloured resin based materials.

Warnock Report

55. **Mr. Patrick McNair Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to introduce legislation based upon the finding of the Warnock report.

Mr. Hayhoe: As soon as practicable.

Lambeth

56. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the staffing levels of Department of Health and Social Security offices in Lambeth.

Mr. Major: The staffing of DHSS local offices which deal with claimants in Lambeth is as follows:—

Office	*Provisional complement 1985-86*	*Staff in post 1 November 1985*
Kennington	90	107
Kennington Park	97	109
Brixton	148	155
Streatham	122	135
Balham	156	176·5
Battersea	140	158
Crystal Palace	117	131·5
Peckham	141	142·5
Southwark	134	151·5

Note:—The figures for complement are provisional and will alter when recent changes are implemented shortly.

As will be seen each office is staffed above the complement which is determined by a complementing system—"A guide to the DHSS local complementing system" is in the Library—the purpose of which is to match numbers of staff to the work load. A fundamental requirement of the system is to establish a base complement and to update the base complement to take account of any changes. This is done by means of complement review. A complement review was begun on 14 October 1985 an when the results are known it will be possible to decide on what levels of staffing are appropriate to the work load. It is our intention to continue to match staff to work loads.

Child Abuse

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the figures for cases of child abuse during the last five years for which figures are available; and if he will distinguish in those figures between cases involving children *(a)* living with their married parents, *(b)* of single parent families *(c)* living with a man and woman who were not married.

Mr. Whitney: The Department maintains no central record of the number of child abuse victims. The responsibility for the protection of children from abuse lies with local authorities, and the Department has issued guidance on the records which should be kept locally.

Hospitals (Fire Prevention)

Mr. McWilliam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if there are any plans for the regular inspection of hospitals by local fire authorities.

Mr. Whitney: There are no such plans, but every health authority is expected to have for each hospital, or other health premises, a fire precautions programme prepared with the advice and assistance of the chief fire officer of the local authority.

Music Therapy

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many music therapists are employed by health authorities in England; and whether he has any plans for allocating more resources for such services.

Mr. Whitney: The number of music therapists whole time equivalents employed by health authorities in England is a follows:

Regional Health Authority	*Number*
Northern	0
Yorkshire	1·2
North Western	1·0
Trent	0
East Anglian	6·5
North West Thames	10·7
North East Thames	6·6
South East Thames	1·8
South West Thames	7·4
Wessex	0·8
Oxford	0
South Western	1·1
West Midlands	2·6
Mersey	1·0
Total	40·7

The employment of these staff is a matter for individual health authorities to determine having regard to local circumstances.

Retirement Age (Pensions)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for social Services what is his estimate of the total annual cost of additional pension payments if the retirement age for men were reduced to 60 years.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Harvey) on 27 June at column *482*.

Home Help Services

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the number of local authorities which currently offer a free home help service *(a)* to all who receive a service, *(b)* to those on supplementary benefit or *(c)* to people on the basis of a means test.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not collected by the Department but the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's publication "Personal Social Services Statistics 1985-86 Estimates", a copy of which is in the Library, indicates (column 159) that 18 authorities are not expecting any income from home help service charges during 1985-86.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people qualified for non-contributory invalidity pension before the changeover to severe disablement allowance; and what proportion of those people now qualify for severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Newton: An estimated 221,600, all of whom would have transferred to severe disablement allowance in November 1984 and would continue to receive the benefit for so long as they remain incapable of work, I regret that it is not known how many of these are still receiving the benefit, but is likely that most of them are. The November 1984 figure is probably underestimated but the extent of this will not be known until the results of the annual statistical exercise are available next year.

Handicapped Children

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many handicapped children are currently in residential institutions and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Available information on residential accommodation for handicapped children is as follows:

Number of places for the under 16s in Homes and Hostels for the Mentally Handicapped.

	As at 31 March 1984
Statutory Homes	2,137
Voluntary Homes	954
Private Homes	97
Total	3,188

Number of local authority supported residents aged under 16 in Homes and Hostels for the Mentally Handicapped.

	As at 31 March 1984
Statutory Homes	1,241
Voluntary Homes	321
Private Homes	74
Other	173
Total	1,809

	As at 31 December 1984
Number of children under 16 in small NHS Mental handicap units in the community	333
Total number of children under 16 in mental handicap hospitals and units (including the NHS units in the community).	1,074

Further information about services for children and handicapped people is contained in "Personal Social Services Statistics 1983-84 Actuals" compiled by the Chartered Institution of Public Finance and Accountancy, a copy of which is in the Library.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to change the child dependent allowance paid to invalidity pensioners, beyond those changes already announced.

Mr. Major: We have no plans for changing the qualifying conditions for child dependency additions paid to invalidity pensioners, though later this month the rate will go up from £7·65 to £8·05 a week.

Pharmacists

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the numbers of vacancies for pharmacists to work in National Health Service hospitals in each of the regional health authorities in England; what percentages of the total numbers these represent; and what proposals he has to resolve recruitment difficulties.

Mr. Hayhoe: Information in statistical form is not held centrally, but I am aware of widespread recruitment difficulties in the basic grade. I understand that the management side of the pharmaceutical Whitley council has already indicated to the staff side that this consideration will feature in proposals which it intends to make at the council's next meeting on 6 December.

Kidney Transplants

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the shortage of matching organs for kidney transplantation; and if he will give any conveniently available statistics.

Mr. Whitney: The number of patients registered at the United Kingdom transplant service as waiting for a kidney transplant on 31 October 1985 was 2,998. The numbers of kidney transplants performed in the United Kingdom, according to data supplied by UKTS, were 1,144 in 1983, 1,443 in 1984 and 1,160 during the first 10 months of 1985. The factor that limits the expansion of the kidney transplant programme is the availability of donor organs,

and we are considering what further measures might be taken to maintain the momentum of last years successful campaign to increase organ donation.

Mrs. Myra Mabel Fairclough

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will initiate an inquiry into the recent death and circumstances behind the death of Mrs. Myra Mabel Fairclough at St. Mary's hospital, Portsmouth; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will require the Portsmouth and South-East Hampshire health authority to make public the details of the inquiry that it held into the death of Mrs. Myra Mabel Fairclough at St. Mary's hospital, Portsmouth.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Portsmouth and South-East Hampshire health authority has not yet completed its internal inquiry into this most unfortunate incident. Until then we are unable to say what further action may be necessary. Decisions about further action and publication must await the receipt of the report.

Benefit Claims (Huyton)

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for benefit have been dealt with by the Huyton office of his Department in each of the last five years and to date in 1985.

Mr. Major: The numbers of claims for benefit dealt with by the Huyton office of the Department, up to October 1985 and for the preceding four years, are set out in the table:

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*April to October 1985*
Sickness and invalidity benefit	18,576	16,517	3,988	3,484	1,900
Maternity allowance	1,034	1,038	1,134	659	490
Retirement pension	1,001	907	880	1,067	643
Supplementary benefit	14,112	13,944	13,612	14,698	7,881

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Information on other benefits dealt with by local offices of the Department is not available in the form requested. No figures for 1980-81 are now available for the Huyton office.

Local Office Staff (Huyton)

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the reduction in personnel in the Huyton office of his Department since April 1985.

Mr. Major: On 1 April 1985 there were 152 staff in post at the Huyton office of the Department. The corresponding figure for 1 November, the latest date for which the information is available, was also 152.

Family Expenditure Survey

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he hopes to publish the 1983 family expenditure survey estimates of *(a)* the numbers of low income families and *(b)* benefit take-up rates.

Mr. Major: No date has yet been decided for publication of these estimates but I hope that they will be available within the next few months. It is not possible to estimate take-up of housing benefit from 1983 family expenditure survey data but an estimate based on 1984 data is expected to be available early next year.

Ambulance Services (Pay)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost of the latest settlement in the ambulance services; and how it is to be financed.

Mr. Whitney: The cost of settlements reached for ambulance officers and control assistants will be contained within an increase of 4·7 per cent. in their pay bills. The trade union side of the ambulance Whitley council is consulting its members on a management side proposal for a salaried structure for ambulance men and women. Costs in 1985-86 would be contained within an increase of 4·7 per cent. of the pay bill. Costs in subsequent years would depend upon the outcome of local agreements intended to lead to major improvements in productivity. Nationally health authorities are expected to meet all pay increases within the total cash sums available to them.

Private Contractors (Liquidation)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if any cleaning and maintenance subsidiary firms of Setspace have been removed from health authority lists following the liquidation of the parent company Endless Holding;

(2) if any arrangements are made to seek to ensure that cleaning and essential maintenance work continues uninterrupted in hospitals affected by the liquidation of private firms contracted in for cleaning and maintenance services;

(3) if his Department maintains a list of companies previously tendering for health authority contracts which have gone into liquidation; and how authorities seek to ensure that successor companies tendering and using the same personnel are operationally viable;

(4) how many companies have gone into liquidation while undertaking National Health Service cleaning and maintenance contracts; which companies they were; and which hospitals were affected.

Mr. Hayhoe: These are matters for health authorities. The information requested is not collected centrally.

NHS (Expenditure Provision)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what public expenditure provision will be made for the National Health Service over the next three years; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: Spending on the National Health Service in England next year is planned to increase by more than

£900 million to over £15 billion. Further increases of some £700 million in each of 1987-88 and 1988-89 will bring the total spending to £16·5 billion by the end of the period. These are substantial increases on our plans published in Cmnd. 9428—£250 million extra in 1986-87 and £300 million extra in 1987-88.

Current spending on the hospital and community health service will increase by £650 million to nearly £10·3 billion in 1986-87, an increase of 6·7 per cent. Health authorities will also retain the benefits of their growing cost improvement programme, which is planned to achieve £150 million this year. They will need to meet pay and price increases from within these resources but the additional funds announced today taken with cost improvement programmes should enable authorities to provide for the growing number of very elderly people and to improve services.

Further increases of £470 million and £440 million are planned for hospital and community health service current spending in 1987-88 and 1988-89, bringing total spending to £11·2 billion by the end of the period. The cash increases provide for leads of more than 1 per cent. over forecast inflation.

Centrla Government provision for hospital and community health service capital spending will be increased in each year. It will rise from £765 million in 1986-87 to £805 million in 1988-89. It will be supplemented by the proceeds of sales of surplus land and buildings which authorities will retain. The value of such sales has already reached £50 million a year and we expect this to increase very substantially. Higher cash provision and increased receipts from sales will enable authorities to carry through major investment programmes in hospitals and in community services.

Spending on the family practitioner services will increase by £230 million to £3·5 billion in 1986-87. Further increases of £200 million are planned in each of the two succeeding years, bringing total spending to £3·9 billion by the end of the period. We have planned to meet forecast demand.

These figures demonstrate the Government's continuing commitment to the National Health Service. The extra cash we are providing and the better value for money our policies are securing will enable the service to continue to provide more and better care for patients.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has yet completed his review of national insurance contributions for 1986-87.

Mr. Fowler: I have completed the annual review under Section 120 of the Social Security Act 1975 and have today laid a draft order which requires the approval of both Houses: the Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) Order 1985 providing for contribution rates, profits limits and revised earnings brackets (for the reduced contribution rates) to take effect from 6 April 1986. I have also laid the Social Security (Contributions) Amendment (No. 6) Regulations 1985, which set out new upper and lower earnings limits for employees' and employers' contributions. A report by the Government Actuary (Cmnd. 9672) which accompanies the order and regulations explains their effect on the national insurance fund.

Employees and employers

As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his statement earlier today, I do not propose to raise the rate of contributions for either employees or employers which remain at the standard rates of 9 per cent. and 10·45 per cent. respectively. In line with the requirements of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975, the lower earnings limit for class 1 contributions is to be increased to £38 per week, just below the new basic retirement pension rate, and the upper earnings limit for employees is to be raised to £285 a week, which is a little under seven and a half times the new basic pension rate. These new earnings limits replace the existing ones of £35·50 and £265 a week respectively.

The value of the reduction in contribution rates announced in the last Budget and introduced on 6 October 1985 as a measure to boost lower paid employment will be maintained. The new reduced rates of 5 per cent. and 7 per cent. for employees, 5 per cent. 7 per cent. and 9 per cent. for employers will extend further up the earnings scale applying to earnings whose totals are within a ceiling of £60 and £95 and, for employers, £140. (The previous ceilings were £55, £90 and £130.) The effects of the changes are as follows:

Not contracted-out employees

Neither the employee nor his employer will have to pay a contribution if his earnings are less than £38 a week. For people earning between £38 and £265 (the old upper limit) there will be no increase for either the employee or the employer. In fact, because of the increase in the earnings ceilings for the reduced contribution rates, many employees and their employers at the lower end of the pay scale will have a smaller contribution to pay. For those employees with earnings above £265 a week, the maximum increase will be £1.80 a week. There will be no corresponding increase for employers for whom there is no Upper Earnings Limit.

Contracted-out employees

Contributions payable by contracted-out employees and their employers will rise slightly. Where earnings are less than £265 a week, the increase will be very small, reflecting the fact that the increase in the lower earnings limit reduces the band of earnings on which the lower contracted-out rate is paid. Any resulting increase will generally not exceed 6p a week for employees and not exceed 11p a week for employers, although many employees and employers will in fact have their contributions reduced as a result of the higher earnings ceilings for the reduced contribution rates.

Additional contributions will be payable by employees earning from £265 to £285 (the new upper limit); the maximum increase will be £1.43 a week. Because there is now no upper earnings limit for employers, the increase in that limit to £285 will mean extension of the contracting-out rebate to earnings between £265 and £285 with corresponding savings for earnings in that range.

The self-employed

The flat-rate class 2 contribution will be raised by 25p to £3.75 a week. Strict application of the formula for calculating self-employed contributions which has previously applied would have meant a class 2 rate of £5.40, but we have thought it right to continue—and again increase — the considerable discount to this formula as a relief to the small business man.

The rate of class 4 contribution is not being increased. The annual limits of profits between which class 4 contributions are paid are being raised from £4,150 and £13,780 to £4,450 and £14,820 respectively.

The effect of these changes is that for self-employed people who pay only class 2 contributions the amount payable in 1986-87 will be £19.50 a year less than for the 1985-86 year. For those self-employed people with profits between £4,450 and £13,780, there will be a reduction of £38.40 a year, assuming the same level of profits as in 1985-86. For those with profits of or above £14,820, the new upper profits limit, the increase will be £27.12 a year.

Class 3 (voluntary) contributions

The rate of class 3 contributions is to be raised from £3.40 to £3.65 a week.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in the light of actual United Kingdom milk production levels, he will make it his policy not to penalise milk producers who exceed their quota.

Mr. Gummer: Producers' liability to pay supplementary levy is governed by Community regulations and individual member states have no discretion to refuse to collect levy if it falls due. However, for the 1985-86 marketing year, provided overall milk production is below the national quota, producers will not be liable to pay levy if they exceed their individual quotas. Even if the national quota were to be exceeded, the offsetting effect of producers who under-utilise their quota would mean that in practice levy liability would be reduced.

Pesticides

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the full result of the working party on pesticide residues is due to be published.

Mrs. Fenner: The working party on pesticide residues published a full report on the results of its work between 1977 and 1981 in June 1982. I expect a comprehensive report of the activities of the working party between 1982 and early 1985 to be published at the end of this year.

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he intends taking following the Ninth report of the steering group on food surveillance entitled "Report of the Working Party on Pesticide Residues (1977-81) Food Surveillance Paper No. 9".

Mrs. Fenner: This report was published in June 1982 and overall presented a reassuring picture. Levels of pesticide residues found in food in the United Kingdom were generally well below internationally accepted maximum residue limits and studies over 20 years have shown a steady decrease in the exposure of the United Kingdom population to persistent pesticide residues in food. Where possible problem areas were highlighted, action has been and continues to be taken to confirm the results of surveys and to modify the approved uses of the pesticides in question.

Food (Colouring Matter)

Mr. Waller asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to bring forward amendments to the Colouring Matter in Food Regulations 1973.

Mrs. Fenner: As my hon. Friend was told on 12 July, the food advisory committee is currently reviewing the use of colours in foods. We have no plans to propose any amendments to the Colouring Matter in Food Regulations 1973 before the committee has reported and any subsequent representations have been fully considered.

Meat

Mr. Cohen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has for further checks on the possible hazards of hormones in meat.

Mrs. Fenner: The hormonal growth promoters currently authorised for use in livestock production have been scientifically evaluated for safety. My expert committees keep the relevant data under review together with the information provided by the national surveillance scheme for residues in meat, which monitors the extent to which residues of certain growth promoters may be present in the meat supply. My officials are also taking part in the discussions of an EC Council working group on a draft Commission directive for a harmonised Community system of residue monitoring.

Mr. Cohen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what procedures he proposes to institute to seek to secure that the export of meat complies with EEC rules requiring it to be residue free.

Mrs. Fenner: Directive 64/433/EEC, as amended, on health problems affecting intra-Community trade in fresh meat provides that the exporting country should undertake testing of meat for the presence of certain residues. The directive does not, however, specify tolerance levels for the substances concerned or the frequency of sampling; these are a matter for individual member states to determine pending adoption of a further directive. My Ministry satisfies the import requirements of other member states on the basis of the monitoring carried out under the national surveillance scheme for residues in meat and in some cases supplementary testing of export consignments.

Wheat

Mr. Livsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much hard milling wheat he estimates will have to be imported over the next 12 months as a result of shortfalls in the quality of some United Kingdom wheat produced in this year's grain harvest.

Mr. Gummer: Import data make no distinction between hard and other wheats. Although it is too early to give an accurate estimate of the quantity, wheat imports this season will clearly be considerably higher than in 1984/85; by mid-October they had reached 515,400 tonnes compared with 251,800 tonnes a year earlier.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 13 November 1985

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Reform (Compensation)

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what decisions he has reached, following his discussions with the Trades Union Congress, on the compensation arrangements for staff affected by the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Tracey: My noble Friend the Minister of State has discussed staffing issues relating to the Local Government Act 1985 with the TUC local government committee, the AMA, and the London and Metropolitan Government Staff Commission. We have also received many responses and representations from other bodies and from many individuals on these matters.

In the light of the views we have received, we have now decided the package of measures which will apply to the staff affected by abolition. My noble Friend has today written to the TUC, enclosing a note summarising the main features of the package. I am arranging for copies of his letter and the note to be placed in the Library. My noble Friend has also written to the AMA and to the staff commission; and arrangements are being made to send copies of the announcement to all the authorities, associations, and unions concerned.

In the Government's view, this package represents a fair balance between, on the one side, the interests of the ratepayers in the metropolitan areas who will ultimately bear the costs, and, on the other, those of the staff concerned, who are faced with the disruption of their careers by the abolition of seven major employers. In making these decisions the Government has had strict regard to the unique circumstances of abolition.

The Government now look to all of those concerned to ensure that the staff involved are as fully and speedily informed as possible about where they stand under these new arrangements and we expect the expiring authorities, the borough and district councils and the unions, now to work together towards a smooth redeployment of staff into the reorganised structure of local government in the metropolitan areas.

Waste Recycling

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to encourage waste recycling in the private and public sectors.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department is co-operating with the Department of Trade and Industry in a programme of measures designed to stimulate more recycling of materials. This includes participation in the work of the recycling advisory unit at the Warren Spring Laboratory. We are currently preparing a circular to local authorities which will encourage measures to facilitate recycling provided that these avoid increases in current expenditure. We are particularly concerned that local authorities should take full advantage of opportunities open to them for securing provision of bottle banks at no extra cost to themselves, and that disposal authorities should reflect the benefit of such measures by giving collection authorities appropriate rebates.

Water Supplies (Nitrate Content)

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will establish a new system for monitoring the nitrate content in water supplies.

Mr. John Patten: The EC directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption came into operation last July and established a new system of minimum monitoring frequencies for nitrate in water supplies. All statutory water undertakers now follow this system, and monitor much more frequently when nitrate concentrations are high or start to rise significantly.

"Home Improvement—a New Approach"

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations his Department has received which were critical of the effects on housing stock of the proposals put forward in his Green Paper "Home Improvement—a New Approach."

Mr. John Patten: My Department has received 423 responses to the Green Paper on home improvement to date. Over 50 per cent. of these expressed no overall judgment on the merits of the proposals; a third were generally unfavourable.

Ethnic Community Schemes

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department has spent for the past five years, including the present financial year, on support for ethnic community schemes; and what proportion this figure is compared to the whole urban aid scheme.

Sir George Young: The approved urban programme expenditure on projects of a specific benefit to ethnic minority communities for the last five years was as follows:

	*Amount** £ *million*	*Proportion of UP expenditure†* *percentage*
1981-82	8	4
1982-83	15	6
1983-84	27	9
1984-85	32	11
1985-86	39	12

* This is the total of approved partnership, programme authority and traditional urban programme expenditure on ethnic minority projects including figures for both new and committed schemes. An estimate is included for the Liverpool partnership for 1985-86.

† These percentages relate to the total approved inner area programme expenditure for the partnership and programme authorities, and the traditional urban programme. The approved expenditure includes an element of overprogramming to allow for programme slippage, so the final outturn position may not precisely reflect the pattern of approvals.

Chinese Community

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department has spent in the last five years including the current financial year on schemes for the Chinese community.

Sir George Young: The approved urban programme expenditure on projects of specific benefit to the Chinese community for the last three years is as follows:

	£
1983-84	91,000
1984-85	131,000
1985-86	402,000

Notes:
1. Figures for earlier years are not available.
2. This is the combined approved partnership, programme, and tradition urban programme expenditure on schemes for the Chinese community including figures for both new and committed schemes. The approved expenditure includes an element of overprogramming to allow for programme slippage, so the final outturn may not precisely equate with approvals.

Grants (Cumbria)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish a list of all grants paid under the traditional urban aid programme and the value of grants paid for each project to each authority within the county of Cumbria for each year since 1979.

Sir George Young: A list of projects in Cumbria approved under the traditional urban programme is as follows. Grant is paid at a rate of 75 per cent. on approved costs. The normal duration of revenue approvals is five years.

Approvals for Local Authorities in Cumbria under the TUP

		CAP	REV
1979-80			
Copeland	Adventure playground off Furness Street, Millom	5,000	—
Cumbria	West Cumbria MIND group home:	13,000	—
		18,000	—
1980-81			
Barrow-in-Furness	Hawcoat Community Centre	79,920	2,880
Cumbria	Cleator Moor Montreal C of E Nursery School	—	25,000
		97,920	27,880
1981-82			
1982-83			
Allerdale	West Cumbrian Co-op development group	—	2,000
Carlisle	Carlisle Aid for Women	—	1,951
Copeland	Millom CAB	2,800	4,855
	Big Hill Adventure Playground	1,375	7,418
	Transport Scheme	8,375	1,659
	Project Homeless Ltd	—	26,050
	Improvement to Richmond Community Centre	3,365	—
	Bigrigg Community Centre	63,500	—
	Mini-bus project, W Cumbria MIND	8,500	2,000
Cumbria	Workington: Ashfield Child Guidance Centre	—	13,700
	Community Worker, Workington	—	10,300
	Valley Community Centre, White Haven	—	10,300
	Community Worker for the Elderly and Handicapped	—	10,300
	Residential Experience Scheme	—	2,400
	Social Worker, Ashfield Centre, Workington	—	10,300
	Newton Nursery Class, Carlisle	—	12,800
	St Michaels Day Centre, Workington	—	4,000
	Peripatetic teachers for pre-school mentally handicapped	—	26,000
	Howgill Centre, Whitehaven	—	31,000
	Youth Wing, Netherhall Centre, Whitehaven	50,000	7,000
	Appointment of Social Worker	—	16,500
		137,915	200,533
1983-84			
Allerdale	Facelift Scheme, Maryport town centre	30,000	—
	Innovation Workshops	—	8,000
Barrow-in-Furness	Dalton Baths	30,000	—
Carlisle	Erection of Industrial Workshops at Port Road	124,000	—
	Erection of Industrial Workshops at Hewson Street	59,000	—
	After School play scheme	950	15,718
Copeland	Age Concern—luncheon club	36,000	17,153
	Provision of Play area at Whitham	1,375	—
	Footbridge over Lowca Beck	2,000	—
Cumbria	Bootcherby family centre	—	50,000

		CAP	REV
	Development of community business and workshop	20,000	12,000
	Peripatetic teacher for pre-school mentally handicapped	—	8,500
	West Cumbria MIND — Copeland	500	9,000
		303,825	120,371
1984-85			
Allerdale	Facelift Scheme, Maryport town centre Phase 2	60,000	—
	Innovation Workshops Phase 2	12,000	22,750
Barrow-in-Furness	Industrial Units, Walney Road	80,000	—
Copeland	Cleator Moor Mill	120,000	—
	West Hensingham Community Centre	20,000	—
		292,000	22,750
1985-86			
Allerdale	Low cost workshops for new businesses	50,000	50,000
Copeland	Greenbank Community Centre	14,670	—
		64,670	50,000

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish his proposals for the urban development grant and the traditional urban aid programme for the future in the county of Cumbria.

Sir George Young: No authority in Cumbria has been invited to submit bids for new approvals under the traditional urban programme in 1986-87. My right hon. Friend has agreed to consider proposals from the local authority associations on the assessment of need in urban areas for future years. Allerdale, as an enterprise zone authority, is invited to bid for urban development grant.

Institute of Zoology

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has now received the report of the review group looking at the Institute of Zoology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. It was a condition of the Government's support for the Zoological Society of London that there should be an independent scientific review of the Institute of Zoology, and I am grateful to the Advisory Board for the Research Councils for undertaking this. I have today placed a copy of its report in the Library. The board found that the institute's research was of high scientific quality, of crucial value to zoological collections nationally and internationally, and with important applications to the quality of the environment, for conservation of endangered species, the understanding of wildlife dynamics, and the preservation of leisure activities. In addition, much of the work was highly relevant to medical research. All contributors to the institute's funding received excellent value for money. The advisory board recommended that further consideration be given to providing support for institute activities at Whipsnade and suggested some increase in the block grant to the society. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has carefully considered this last recommendation, but he has concluded that it would be inappropriate to make any change in the level of grant at present. It is for the society to decide how best to allocate the resources available to it. The level of support for the society will be reviewed in 1986-87, as indicated in the statement by the then Secretary of State for the Environment on 13 December 1984, at column 580.

House Building

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of new housing starts that are required each year to maintain the housing stock at current levels of size and quality.

Sir George Young: At 1984 rates of removal of dwellings from the housing stock, about 22,000 new houses would be required to maintain the stock in England at the same size as at the end of 1984 (18,574,000). Maintaining the quality of the stock depends far more on upkeep and renovation than on new building, hence there can be no unique number of houses to be demolished and replaced to maintain the quality of the housing stock at its present level.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has of the percentage of the new housing starts required each year to maintain existing levels which are currently made.

Sir George Young: I do not understand my hon. Friend's question.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Prosecution Service

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Attorney-General what account he is taking of the representations being made to him about the structure of the new prosecution service and the pay levels involved; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: I have received representations from the Crown Prosecution Service Trade Union Group, the Prosecuting Solicitors Society of England and Wales and the National Association of Prosecuting Solicitors' Staffs as well as from a number of individuals and hon. Members. I have met the CPSTUG on three occasions and officers of PSSEW also on three occasions. They explained to me their concern about the published proposals as to pay, grading and complementing. In

addition, they alleged a lack of information on important matters affecting their members. The most recent of these meetings took place yesterday and I was able to respond in respect of a wide range of matters affecting conditions of service in a way which met a large proportion of the requests made by CPSTUG.

As regards three matters identified as giving rise to particular concern, I informed the CPSTUG and PSSEW as follows:

First, the salary scale for the crown prosecutor grade will now be substantially improved, so that it will extend from £10,500 to £15,000 (£9,700 — £14,000 was formerly proposed). The intermediate points will be as follows: £11,100; £11,700; £12,300; £12,950; £13,600; £14,250. This will mean a substantial reduction in the number of transferring staff to whom pay protection will need to apply.

Secondly, the ratio of crown prosecutor to senior crown prosecutor posts will now be improved from 3: 1 to 2: 1. This, too, will reduce the number of transferring staff who will require pay protection, and will certainly enhance career prospects within the new service not only in terms of an increase in the number of senior crown prosecutor posts, but also because the improved ration means some consequential increase in the number and grading of the more senior posts.

Thirdly, the provisions for pay protection have also been improved. Here, it has previously been announced there will be full pay protection for 10 years from the date of transfer so that, if they wish, staff may stay on their original local government pay scale and receive local government pay rises. This 10-year period will be followed by one of four years during which the individual's salary will be tapered by five equal annual instalments towards the appropriate Civil Service salary. It has now also been decided, exceptionally, that if at the end of this overall period of 14 years the individual's salary still represents a lead over the appropriate Civil Service salary there will be a provision whereby the higher salary may be retained on a mark-time basis until such time as the Civil Service salary appropriate to his-her grade equals or exceeds the mark-time salary.

With regard to each item of a wider range of issues ancillary to the main questions of pay and grading, I informed the CPSTUG and PSSEW of our specific intentions, and the Director of Public Prosecutions has written to all chief crown prosecutors designate with these details so that they may be promulgated to transferring staff.

Wherever possible existing conditions will be carried over when staff transfer, sometimes on a short-term transitional basis, sometimes on an individual reserved rights or mark-time basis. The overall approach has been to try to ensure that staff will not be disadvantaged by transferring, while at the same time having necessary and proper regard to the general terms and conditions which apply to the rest of the Civil Service.

I am satisfied that these proposals are appropriate to the Government's dual objectives, namely, of ensuring that the new service attracts and retains staff of the calibre necessary for its important work, and of avoiding the imposition on the taxpayer of an unnecessarily heavy bill.

Crown Courts (Trial Delays)

Mr. Irving asked the Attorney-General how long, on average, defendants spend in custody awaiting trial at the Crown Court *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in London and the south-east.

The Solicitor-General: The average waiting time during 1984 between committal from the magistrates' court and start of Crown Court hearing for defendants committed in custody was 10·1 weeks in England and Wales overall, 16·5 weeks in London, and 11·5 weeks in the remainder of the south eastern circuit.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Travelling People

41. **Mr. Lambie** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he has any plans to meet the procurator fiscal of Kilmarnock, to discuss the Lord Advocate's policy towards the non-harassment of travelling people.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I have no plans to meet the procurator fiscal to discuss this matter.

Warrant Sales

42. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland when he intends to put before Parliament Her Majesty's Government's proposals for changes to the warrant sales procedure in Scotland.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The right hon. Gentleman's question is felicitously timed since my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate has today presented to Parliament, under section 3(2) of the Law Commissions Act 1965, the Scottish Law Commission's report on diligence and debtor protection. The report will be published tomorrow.

Before deciding in what precise way reforms should take place the Government wish to be fully aware of the public reaction to the Commission's recommendations. My noble and learned Friend intends therefore to issue a consultation paper inviting comments on the report. The consultation paper will be issued once the report is published, and copies will be placed in the Library.

Drug offences (Statistics)

43. **Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what percentage of the total number of cases brought before the High Court in 1985 have been drug cases; how may cases have been brought to court this year; and how many are pending.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Figures available to 31 October 1985 indicate that approximately 31 per cent. of cases brought before the High Court so far this year have been drugs cases. Six hundred and ninety-one cases had been indicted into the High Court to 31 October 1985 of which 213 were drugs cases. It is presently estimated that there are 134 cases pending for sittings of the High Court in November and December. Thirty six of these are drugs cases.

45. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will give the numbers of prosecutions for drug-related offences under summary and solemn procedure, respectively, for the latest year for which statistics are available.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The latest year for which the statistics requested are available is 1984. The figures are at present provisional. Three hundred and forty-four persons were proceeded against for drug-related offences under solemn procedure; 2,239 persons were proceeded against for such offences under summary procedure.

Statements (Tape Recording)

44. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what discussions he has had recently with procurators fiscal about tape recording of statements by suspects in police stations.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I have had no such discussions recently with procurators fiscal. The report of the working party supervising the experiment was published on 29 August 1985 and a consultation paper has been issued inviting comments from interested bodies prior to 31 December 1985. A decision will thereafter be made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State as to whether tape-recording of police interviews should be introduced in Scotland on a formal basis.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Overseas Students

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will reconsider the scheme to charge overseas students full rates for academic courses taken in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: No. There is no reason why the taxpayer should subsidise all overseas students. The Government are committed instead to a policy of targeted support related to the needs of particular overseas countries and to British policy objectives. In 1984-85 over 16,000 students were supported at a cost of over £70 million.

Music Education

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what criteria are used to determine the level of financial provision for music education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The responsibility for determining the level of provision for music education in maintained schools rests with the local education authorities and with the schools themselves. My right hon. Friend has made clear the Government's view that music should have a worthwhile place in the primary and secondary school curriculum, and that all pupils in our schools can derive fulfilment and enjoyment from the study and practice of music.

Schools

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what information he has concerning the number of schools in England and Wales that were built within the last 10 years; which are between 10 and 50 years old; and which are between 50 and 80 years old, or are over 80 years old;

(2) what information he has concerning the number of schools in the north-west region that were built within the last 10 years; which are between 10 and 50 years old; and which are between 50 and 80 years old, or are over 80 years old.

Mr. Dunn: Information in the form requested is not held centrally. However, in the 10 year period 1975-76 to 1984-85 approval was given to 1,074 major building projects for the provision of new or replacement maintained schools in England, including 129 in the north-west region. Figures to cover the earlier periods are not available. Schools in Wales are the concern of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio (Derbyshire)

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how the pupil to teacher ratio in Derbyshire today compares with figures for 1979 and 1981.

Mr. Dunn: The overall pupil-teacher ratio for maintained primary, middle and secondary schools in Derbyshire local education authority in January 1985 was 18·3. The corresponding ratios for 1979 and 1981 were 20·2 and 19·9, respectively.

TRANSPORT

Aviation Fuel

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on research work being carried out on anti-mist in kerosene additive to aviation fuel in order to retard inflammability.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The full-scale crash demonstration of anti-misting kerosene, which took place in December 1984, revealed weaknesses in AMK's ability to suppress fire in the presence of a powerful, sustained ignition source — such as a hot engine. The Federal Aviation Administration of America recently held a fuel safety reseach conference to review all available options to reduce the risk of post-crash fire. The conference recommended that there should be a continued programme of research to define the conditions in which AMK is effective and to investigate the practical problems of its use. The FAA's response to the conference recommendations is expected in about three months.

Drivers (Physical Fitness)

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the regulations governing the physical fitness required for drivers of commercial coaches, of heavy goods vehicles and commercial aircraft, respectively; and what steps he has taken to satisfy himself of the adequacy of these regulations in terms of the safety of the public.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Holders of United Kingdom pilot licences are required by the Civil Aviation Authority, which is solely responsible for aviation safety standards, to hold a valid and appropriate medical certificate.

A public service or heavy goods vehicle driver applying for a first or subsequent vocational licence is required to be medically fit and to have been free from any epileptic attack since reaching the age of five. The licensing authorities are guided by standards recommended by the Medical Commission on Accident Prevention in its publication "Medical Aspects of Fitness to Drive" (4th edition published last month).

Compliance is checked by a declaration every time a driver applies, and by an initial medical examination. Public service vehicle drivers are required to submit a fresh medical report with every five-yearly renewal application from the age of 46, and then annually from the

age of 65; heavy goods vehicle drivers have to provide a report with renewals every three years from the age of 60. Both categories of driver are required by law to report to DVLC the onset or worsening of any disability which is expected to last more than three months.

These procedures were reviewed by a working party which reported in September 1983, and I announced the Government's conclusions about its proposals in my answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 14 June 1985, at columns *593-94*. Our aim is to identify, directly and by bringing the risks to the attention of doctors, the small percentage of drivers whose medical history indicates that they present a high risk.

European Road Safety Year 1986

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Transport what contributions his Department will be making to European Road Safety Year 1986.

Mrs. Chalker: My Department will give European Road Safety Year its full support. The Department's national publicity campaigns will use the Community logo and poster and will focus on themes agreed in the Community (children and young people, cyclists and motorcyclists, drinking and driving). We shall encourage initiatives by local authorities and by the private sector, and publicise these in a special newsletter.

M25 (Fog Hazards)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport what reports his Department received *(a)* before the road was planned and *(b)* during its construction about the possibility of fog hazards on the M25 at points where the motorway crosses river beds.

Mrs. Chalker: Separate studies were carried out before construction began on sections of the M25 crossing the Mole valley in Surrey, the Gade valley in Hertfordshire and the Colne valley in Buckinghamshire.

In August I announced that the Meteorological Office had carried out a study which identified places along the whole of the M25 which were particularly fog-prone. We are now considering what further steps we might take to help reduce fog-related accidents on the motorway. But there is only one real answer to the problem of safety in fog, and that is careful driving.

A140

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are now or have been in the past to make the entire A140 a dual carriageway road; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Since the Department accorded trunk road status to the A140 in 1978 there have been no plans to dual the road or any part of it. It is unlikely that predicted levels of traffic will justify dual carriageway improvements in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Transport what improvement schemes are currently planned for the A140; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Bypasses for Scole and Dickleburgh are in the national trunk road programme for start of work between April 1987 and March 1989. Improvements are also being planned for the B1135 junction and the Church road junction at Tasburgh, and further schemes will be considered for the programme when they become justifiable.

British Rail (Western Region)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will discuss the board's draft proposals for service reductions on western region suburban services out of Paddington to Reading via Hanwell and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Responsibility for timetabling services lies with British Rail. If my hon. Friend has any specific points, I suggest that he raises them with the chairman.

Coaches

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he has any plans to introduce legislation to restrict coach speeds further on motorways;

(2) whether there are any plans to introduce legislation to ban coaches from the fast lane of motorways.

Mrs. Chalker: We are looking very closely at ways of controlling the speed of coaches on motorways, and I shall announce our conclusions in due course.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Plastic Bullets

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which police forces in England and Wales have ordered or received plastic bullets.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that at present the following police forces hold stocks of plastic baton rounds:

Metropolitan Police	Leicestershire
Avon and Somerset	Merseyside
Essex	North Wales
Greater Manchester	North Yorkshire
Humberside	Sussex
Kent	Warwickshire
Lancashire	

No orders for this equipment are outstanding.

Prison Workshops and Hospitals

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future of Crown immunity in regard to prison workshops and prison hospitals.

Mr. Mellor: On the assumption that the question is intended to relate to health and safety legislation, no change is planned to the present position whereby the Health and Safety Executive exercises its powers to inspect prison department establishments to ensure compliance with the relevant statutory provisions.

Mrs. Muriel McCullough

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will consider moving Mrs. Muriel McCullough from Durham prison.

Mr. Mellor: The question of transferring Mrs. McCullough from Her Majesty's prison Durham to another establishment will be considered shortly.

Blundeston Prison

Mr. Prior asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the findings of the inspection team which visited Her Majesty's prison, Blundeston between December 1984 and January 1985.

Mr. Mellor: A copy of the staff inspection report was made available in the normal way to local management and the interested trades unions in July. We have no plans for any more general publication.

Terrorism

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of persons wanted in connection with terrorist offences committed since and including 1969 who have been extradited from the Irish Republic to Great Britain and vice versa.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The return of fugitives to and from the Republic of Ireland takes place by means of endorsed warrants of arrest. The Department does not have records of individual cases, but I understand that since 1969 no fugitives have been returned in respect of terrorist offences. However, two persons were returned to the Republic who had claimed unsuccessfully that their offences were political, and one person was returned to Great Britain having made a similar claim.

Prison Medical Service

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to integrate the prison medical service into the National Health Service: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: A considerable degree of functional integration between the prison medical service and the National Health Service already exists.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of prison hospital officers; and how many of them have professional nursing qualifications.

Mr. Mellor: On 1 November 1985 there were 901 hospital officers, of whom 131 had professional nursing qualifications.

Prisoners (Drugs)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give for 1984 the total number of doses of drugs administered to prisoners, the number of prisoners receiving those doses and a breakdown of such dosage by prisoner's sex.

Mr. Mellor: The numbers of doses of medicines (of all categories) recorded in prison pharmacies as having been administered to inmate patients in the year ended 31 December 1984 are:

	Numbers
Establishments for males	8,580,014
Establishments for females	925,472
TOTAL	9,505,486

The number of patients to whom the medicines were administered is not recorded.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the inquiry into an alleged misuse of the police national computer announced on 19 June, *Official Report*, column 138, to be completed; and when he expects the result to be made public.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that the Police Complaints Authority expects the inquiry to be completed early in the new year and that a statement will be made as soon as practicable thereafter.

Mr. Roy Garner

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis stating how much money from public funds has been paid to Mr. Roy Garner, and a detailed breakdown of the purpose of such payments; whether any reward limits have been exceeded in any payments to Mr. Garner; and why.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is not the practice of the Metropolitan police to release details of reward payments.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide details of his Department's broadcasting unit's involvement relating to the proposed Brass Tacks programme which refers to Mr. Roy Garner and alleged payments to him by the Metropolitan police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The broadcasting department of the Home Office was not involved in the decision of the BBC to defer transmission of the programme.

Lower Security Prisons

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are planned to implement the control review committee's recommendations for greater home leave opportunities, the use of telephones and the relaxation of censorship in lower security prisons.

Mr. Mellor: We accept the merit of the arguments advanced by the control review committee for enhancing these aspects of regimes at establishments in the lower security categories, and we intend to make a start shortly on implementing these recommendations at open establishments.

Immigration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers who have been temporarily admitted pending further consideration of their cases have been returned at public expense between January and September; and what was the corresponding number for the same period in 1984.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that the information requested is not readily available.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average delay between the receipt of a letter from a Member of Parliament on behalf of an immigrant or visitor refused at a port of entry and a reply from the Minister.

Mr. Waddington: In the third quarter of this year a substantive reply was sent about 11 weeks, on average, after the receipt of written representations on port refusal cases. This period has increased by about a week since then, reflecting the increase in the number of representations made.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many passengers from Bangladesh entered the United Kingdom between July and September 1985, compared with the same period in 1984;

(2) how many passengers from Bangladesh entered the United Kingdom between July and September in each of the following categories: *(a)* ordinary visitors, *(b)* business visitors, *(c)* students, *(d)* returning residents, *(e)* with entry clearance for settlement and *(f)* in other categories.

Mr. Waddington: In July to September 1984 a total of about 8,000 Bangladeshi citizens (including returning residents and those given settlement on arrival) were admitted to the United Kingdom. Corresponding figures for 1985 are not available, since the figures of admission of passengers by nationality are not yet available beyond the end of June.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people from Bangladesh have *(a)* been given temporary admission to the United Kingdom and *(b)* absconded in each month since January 1984.

Mr. Waddington: I shall reply as soon as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the number of people living and working in the Greater London area who are employed in industries covered by wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not available.

Electrical Inspectors

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Paymaster General what was the number of electrical inspectors in each of the last 10 years; and what is the present number.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The number of electrical inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Executive is as follows:

1 November	*Number*
1975	37
1976	46
1977	49
1978	50
1979	51
1980	46
1981	45
1982	43
1983	41
1984	40
1985	37

One new electrical inspector is expected to take up post shortly and further recruitment is planned in the next few months.

Regional Fraud Teams

Mr. Colvin asked the Paymaster General how many employees in his Department are employed in the regional fraud teams; and what will be the total cost of running these squads during the current financial year.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 31 October 1985 there were 93 employees employed in the regional fraud teams. These teams are to be increased and by the 30 November 1985 it is expected that there will be 113.

The total gross cost of running these teams, including the expected increase in staff, is likely to be £1·7 million in the current financial year. The net cost is nil, with a minimum calculated saving to the Exchequer of £5·9 million.

Disabled People

Mr. Wigley asked the Paymaster General how many registered disabled people were in employment in the United Kingdom on the last available date; and how this compares with corresponding figures for each of the previous five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested.

Pay

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General what was the average increase in pay for each of the past 10 years for *(a)* the lowest paid 10 per cent. of men and women, *(b)* the lowest paid 25 per cent. of men and women, *(c)* the highest paid 10 per cent. of men and women and *(d)* the highest paid 25 per cent. of men and women.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table sets out the available information on the annual percentage changes in gross weekly earnings of full-time adult employees at the lowest and highest decile points and at the lower and upper quartiles of the earnings distribution.

The change in earnings at the particular decile or quartile points of the earnings distribution will not necessarily reflect the change in earnings of particular individuals. The position of particular employees in the earnings distribution will vary over time as earnings vary with seniority, changes in grades and occupations, etc.

Percentage increases in gross weekly earnings of full-time adult employees at decile and quartile points of the earnings distribution*

Year to April	Lowest decile†		Lower quartile‡		Upper quartile‖		Upper decile¶	
	Males●	Females■	Males●	Females■	Males●	Females■	Males●	Females■
1976	18·7	21·7	18·1	22·3	18·0	24·8	18·9	25·1
1977	10·8	15·0	10·1	13·5	9·8	9·8	8·7	8·3
1978	11·2	11·2	12·2	10·4	13·0	11·1	13·6	9·9
1979	13·0	13·4	14·1	12·4	14·5	12·0	13·7	10·8
1980	20·7	21·9	20·3	22·8	22·0	25·3	24·3	26·0
1981	11·0	12·9	11·2	12·8	14·2	17·0	15·8	21·6
1982	8·2	7·7	8·9	8·1	10·2	9·2	10·2	7·1
1983	*7·4*	*9·0*	*7·7*	*9·8*	*8·0*	*10·1*	*9·1*	*9·3*
1984	6·7	6·8	7·0	6·3	8·7	7·6	9·1	6·7
1985	6·2	7·1	7·2	7·1	8·0	8·4	7·6	6·6

Source: New Earnings Survey

* whose earnings were not affected by absence
† the point below which the earnings of 10 per cent. of employees lie
‡ the point below which the earnings of 25 per cent. of employees lie
‖ the point above which the earnings of 25 per cent. of employees lie
¶ the point above which the earnings of 10 per cent. of employees lie
● the figures to 1983 relate to males aged 21 and over; those for 1984 and 1985 relate to males on adult rates of pay
■ the figures to 1983 relate to females aged 18 and over; those for 1984 and 1985 relate to females on adult rates of pay

Community Programme

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General how many additional community programme places became available in October.

Mr. Alan Clark: Eight thousand three hundred and forty five.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Irving asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total numbers of persons available for work in *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1983 and at the latest date for which figures are available; and how many persons were actually employed or self-employed in each case.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is estimated from the labour force survey that in the spring of 1984 there were 23,348,000 people living in private households in Great Britain who were in employment (employed or self-employed) or engaged in employment training schemes; the equivalent figures for 1979 and 1983 were 24,126,000 and 22,830,000. In 1984 there were a further 4,363,000 who said they would be available to start work within two weeks. Corresponding estimates are not available from earlier surveys.

Truck Acts

Mr. Evans asked the Paymaster General (1) which organisations or individuals he has consulted about the future operation of the Truck Acts;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* all the individuals and organisations who have made representations to him opposing the abolition or amendment of the Truck Acts;

(3) if he will list in the *Official Report* all the organisations and individuals who have made representations to him calling for the abolition or amendment of the Truck Acts.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Two consultative documents have been issued by this Department on the future of the Truck Acts.

More than 600 copies of the consultative document on the repeal of the Truck Acts published in March 1983 were issued. The Department received over 100 responses from organisations of employers and workers, and from other bodies and individuals. Of the options put forward in the paper, a few organisations favoured outright repeal of the Truck Acts, but a substantial majority of respondents favoured repeal of the Truck Acts with the enactment of up-to-date legislation concerning deductions from wages.

More than 500 copies of the second consultative document on the form which the measures on deductions might take were issued, and more than 150 responses received.

A majority of respondents favoured some form of protection on deductions and in the case of deductions in respect of stock or cash deficiencies there was strong support for a limit on the amount which can be deducted in any pay period.

Mr. Evans asked the Paymaster General (1) if he has any plans to amend the Truck Acts; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to repeal the Truck Acts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We intend to introduce legislation during this parliamentary Session to repeal the Truck Acts and associated legislation and to introduce up-to-date provisions concerning deductions from pay.

European Community (Draft Directives)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Paymaster General what recent discussions have been held in the EEC Council of Ministers on *(a)* the draft directive on noise at work, *(b)* the draft directive on parental leave, *(c)* the draft directive on part-time work, and *(d)* the draft directive on employee consultation; what are the remaining government objections to each of these drafts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply by my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) on 25 June, at columns 370-71.

In discussions on the draft directive on noise between officials since the June Labour and Social Affairs Council, it has become clear that there are still some problems

concerning the proposed provisions for hearing checks and for exposure levels in new plant. These are more fully described in a supplementary explanatory memorandum (8818/84; COM(84)426) submitted to the House on 22 October.

On the draft directives on parental leave, part-time work and employee consultation the position is unchanged since my replies to the hon. Member on 17 July, at column 170.

The results of the Government's domestic consultation exercise on the draft directive on parental leave were placed in the Library on 8 November. The debate on parental leave recommended by the Select Committee on European Legislation is likely to be held in the near future.

The draft directives on noise and parental leave are likely to be discussed at the Labour and Social Affairs Council on 5 December.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

UNESCO

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any discussions have taken place in the last six months between the United Kingdom and the United States concerning United Kingdom membership of UNESCO; and if any such talks are planned for the future.

Mr. Raison: We have kept in regular contact with the United States Government about the reforms which we and other Governments have been seeking in UNESCO, mainly through our contacts with the United States observer mission in Paris and at the general conference. I met Mr. Newell of the United States State Department in Washington this June and the chairman of the United States observer panel (Mr. L. Marks) in Sofia last month. We intend to keep in touch with the United States and other partners before our final decision on UNESCO is made.

Development Council

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Community Development Council held on 4 November.

Mr. Raison: I represented the United Kingdom at the EC Development Council on 4 November. The main item on the agenda was to review the Community's response to the famine in Africa. The Council noted that the Community and the member states had more than fulfilled pledges made by the European Council in Dublin in December 1984 to provide 1·2 million tonnes of food aid to the countries in Africa most severely affected by famine.

It endorsed in principle proposals by the European Commission to use resources available from the fourth and fifth European development funds to finance rehabilitation in the countries in Africa most severely affected by famine; and invited the Commission to identify specific actions to be undertaken in each country.

In accordance with the conclusions of the European Council in Milan in June 1985, the Council also considered the Commission proposals to establish a reserve in the 1986 EC budget to provide up to 500,000 tonnes of wheat equivalent in addition to the normal food aid programme should famine conditions recur. The Council considered that, without prejudice to the budgetary process, the creation of an additional food aid reserve was necessary. The United Kingdom recorded its view that a reserve to meet such emergency needs should be established within the Community's normal food aid programme for 1986, and that food aid for famine relief should be the first call on that programme.

The Council also discussed briefly Commission papers on women in development, the co-ordination of member states' aid policies and trade promotion. It agreed on programmes of further work in each of these areas.

SCOTLAND

Drug Dealers (Glasgow)

11. **Mr. Martin** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Strathclyde as to the steps being taken by the police to curb the activities of drug dealers in Glasgow.

Mr. John MacKay: No. Strathclyde police have responded vigorously to the upsurge in drug misuse and trafficking. Last year its drug squad was increased in strength from 19 to 30 officers, with the main thrust of force policy directed towards the detection of dealers. In 1984, 389 persons were charged with drug trafficking offences and I understand that this year, in the period up to 30 September, a further 288 persons have been charged with such offences.

Gartcosh

12. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received in relation to Gartcosh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has received many representations on various aspects of the British Steel Corporation's decision to close the Gartcosh cold-rolling mill. The decision was one for the commercial judgment of the corporation. The closure will reduce surplus capacity in the corporation's cold-rolling activities and thereby increase overall productivity and improve the financial performance of the corporation.

Farmers (Severe Weather Compensation)

13. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now make a statement on the situation regarding representations which have been made to him for financial aid to the farming industry following recent severe weather.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. Friend has received representations from many quarters, including from many right hon. and hon. Members. These are all being considered carefully and an announcement about financial aid will be made as soon as possible.

23. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assistance he proposes to offer to the agricultural industry in view of exceptionally bad weather during the summer and autumn.

Mr. Younger: In the light of all the relevant information and of the many representations I have

received, I am currently considering what assistance should be given. An announcement will be made as soon as possible.

28. **Mr. Forsyth** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is now in a position to announce measures to assist those farmers hardest hit by the exceptional summer weather conditions in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: A full announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Council House Sales

14. **Mr. Malone** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the most up-to-date figures for council house sales in Aberdeen.

Mr. Ancram: In the quarter ending 30 June 1985, the most recent quarter for which information is available, there were 103 sales to sitting tenants in Aberdeen city bringing the total to 2,443 sales since the introduction of the Tenants Rights Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980.

25. **Mr. Hugh Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he is considering to increase sales of public sector houses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Over Scotland as a whole, receipts from council house sales are in line with estimates and the level of applications to buy is buoyant. However, we are anxious that tenants should be fully aware of the opportunities for home ownership, and last month we launched a publicity campaign to ensure that all tenants receive information on the rights given to them by this Govenment to buy their homes. In addition, we shall shortly be bringing forward proposals to extend the right to buy to tenants of housing associations and regional councils and to increase by a further 10 per cent. the discount available on sales of flats.

Agriculture (Highlands and Islands)

15. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the current situation within agriculture in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Like many other parts of Scotland, agriculture in the Highlands and Islands was hit hard by the severe weather conditions experienced over the summer months.

It is still too early to predict to what extent the effects of the bad weather will depress farm incomes in the Highlands and Islands.

Further Education (Funding)

16. **Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will take steps to ensure that further education colleges, particularly Telford college, receive the necessary funding for their educational development.

Mr. Allan Stewart: It is the responsibility of the local authorities to decide what provision is made in current expenditure for further education, having regard to their expenditure guidelines. I cannot comment upon the provision made to individual colleges by particular education authorities.

General Practitioners (Patient Lists)

17. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what change there has been in the average patient list size per general medical practitioner in Scotland between May 1979 and 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: Figures are collected annually at 1 October. Between October 1979 and October 1984, the latest date available, there was a reduction in the average list size of general medical practitioners in Scotland from 1,856 to 1,704.

Integrated Development Programme

18. **Mr. Donald Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has made to the EEC for the extension of the integrated development programme in the Western Isles and the possibility of extending it to the crofting counties.

Mr. Younger: Under my direction, my officials have been liaising with the European Commission about specific structures measures for some time. I understand that the Commission will shortly publish a package of specific structures proposals related to the Community area as a whole, both north and south.

Teachers' Salaries

19. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will now agree to set up an independent review of teachers' salaries.

Mr. Allan Stewart: No. Pay cannot be considered in isolation from a proper reappraisal of the duties for which teachers are paid.

Ministerial Meetings

20. **Mr. Craigen** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry), the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Trades Union Congress.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend met the chairman of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) on 1 October and addressed the council's international forum on 8 November. He met the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 4 October to discuss a variety of issues, and last met representatives of the Scottish Trades Union Congress on 12 November to discuss Ravenscraig and Gartcosh.

Agriculture Colleges (Advisory Service)

21. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the principals of Scotland's agriculture colleges to discuss the implications of the proposed changes in the advisory service.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State met the chairman of the Council of the Scottish Agricultural Colleges and the college principals on 29 March 1985 when the future funding and organisation of the advisory service in Scotland were discussed.

My Department remains in very close contact with the college principals and is on the point of issuing a consultation paper on the future of the advisory services in Scotland.

Rating Reform

22. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for the reform of the rating system in Scotland; and when he expects to lay such proposals before Parliament.

Mr. Younger: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for local government and the environment earlier today to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall).

Greater Glasgow Health Board

24. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the greater Glasgow health board to discuss its future finances.

Mr. John MacKay: I have no present plans to meet Greater Glasgow health board to discuss financial matters, but I met health board chairmen collectively yesterday and discussed a range of relevant issues. I am aware of the concern expressed by the board about the finance available to it. However, in terms of the SHARE arrangements—under which each board's share of the available revenue resources is determined—Greater Glasgow is the second best funded board in Scotland.

Scottish TUC

26. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the general council of the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the Scottish economy.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudon (Mr. McKelvey).

Drug Abuse

27. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about drug abuse in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: The Government are very concerned about the sharp increase in the incidence of drug misuse in Scotland in recent years. Within the comprehensive strategy set out in "Tackling Drug Misuse: A Summary of the Government's Strategy", published in March 1985, the Government are taking a wide range of positive measures aimed at curbing this problem

Teachers' Dispute

29. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the impact of the dispute in Scottish schools on the examination prospects for students in 1986.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I have placed in the Library of the House a letter of 5 November from the Scottish Examination Board to schools and education authorities which states its position in the light of the boycott of Scottish Certificate of Education and Certificate of Sixth Year Studies examination procedures announced by the Educational Institute of Scotland. This makes clear that, while not minimising the threat posed by the boycott, the board is resolved to do everything in its power to ensure that the 1986 examinations are held, that candidate's work is assessed and that awards are made. I share the board's resolve and commend its advice that candidates should continue with their studies.

Separately, the Scottish Examination Board has indicated to me that it will be considering what arrangements for examination appeals might be most appropriate in 1986 in order to be as fair as possible to all candidates while fully maintaining the board's standards.

In particular, the board has in mind the possibility of permitting parents or candidates themselves to apply directly for a re-marking of their examination scripts although no decisions have yet been taken and no retrospective changes can be made for 1985.

The EIS sanctions extend to Certificate of Secondary Education courses administered by the North Regional Examination Board (NREB) and taken by a number of pupils in Scotland. The NREB has indicated that it will carry out its normal procedures but that the nature of the courses involved is likely to mean that, without teacher co-operation, final certification will be impossible.

I deeply regret the EIS decision and also the decision of the Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association announced yesterday to support a more limited boycott. I hope that, in the interests of their pupils, teachers will nevertheless carry out examination procedures normally.

33. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the teaching unions to discuss the current dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I last met representatives of the teachers' panel on 27 September. I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend on 22 October at column 161.

35. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress there has been in talks on the teachers' strike in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer to my right hon. Friend's statement to the House on 22 October at column 161. The discussions with teachers' representatives are continuing.

Agricultural Research and Advisory Services

30. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future of agricultural research and advisory services in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: As I indicated in my answer to the hon. Member on 30 October 1985 at column *546*, my noble Friend the Minister of State hopes to publish a paper on the future strategy for agricultural research and development in Scotland around the beginning of December. A consultation paper on the future of the agricultural advisory services in Scotland is on the point of publication.

Dornoch Firth

31. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the progress of the plans to bridge the Dornoch firth.

Mr. Ancram: My Department is in close touch with British Rail about the possibility of a joint road-rail crossing of the Dornoch firth and I am awaiting its decision on whether to make a firm commitment. Whether or not the rail element is included, progress on the scheme will depend on the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures and the availability of finance. The projected start date is therefore still very tentative, but I envisage the earliest date for the first phase, the approach roads, being spring 1987.

Public Housing Stock

32. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to increase the allocation for the next financial year of resources for the improvement and repair of the public housing stock.

Mr. Ancram: I am not yet able to say what level of resources will be allocated to public housing next year.

Agricultural Production (Losses)

34. **Mr. Corrie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the estimated loss of agricultural production in Scotland due to the weather conditions during the last six months.

Mr. Younger: An estimate of the impact of the weather and other factors affecting the profitability of British agriculture will be contained in the annual review of agriculture White Paper which will be published early next year.

Glasgow Eastern Area Renewal Project

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on what date the Glasgow eastern area renewal project in Glasgow will officially come to an end.

Mr. Ancram: The formal co-ordinating machinery for the Glasgow eastern area renewal project will be wound up on 31 March 1987. Discussions are now under way amongst the seven participating agencies about future management arrangements for their continuing commitment to the area after that date.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many houses below the tolerable standard still exist in *(a)* the city of Glasgow, *(b)* the Glasgow eastern area renewal area of Glasgow, and *(c)* the Shettleston parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Ancram: The city of Glasgow district council estimates that the number of dwellings below the tolerable standard at 31 March 1985 was just over 12,000. The corresponding figure for 31 March 1980 was 31,300. Information is not collected centrally for other than district council areas.

Legal Aid

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish details of proposed new legislation regarding the administration of legal aid in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. Friend hopes to introduce a Bill after the Christmas recess.

Housing (Dundee)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, following the unanimous decision of Dundee district council to approach him about the expenditure guidelines and rate fund contribution to the housing account allocated to the city, he will now meet a delegation from that council to discuss the allocations.

Mr. Ancram: No. In line with past procedure, my right hon. Friend and I hold discussions on current expenditure guidelines with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, not individual councils. On the provisional rate fund contributions to the housing revenue account my right hon. Friend has made clear his wish that representations from individual authorities should be made at official level. Such a meeting was offered to Dundee district council, but I understand that the council has, at least for the time being, declined the offer.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on changes intended by the Manpower Services Commission's proposals of June and September on funding and administration of the proposed two-year youth training scheme; what effect he expects these proposed changes will have on those organisations presently involved in Mode B schemes with particular reference to young people with special needs.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has received one direct representation on the subject of funding and administration of the two-year youth training scheme. A number of representations have also been received by the Manpower Services Commission. It is recognised that it will take some time for existing providers of mode B1 schemes to adjust to the new funding conditions and the commission accordingly agreed in September revised transitional funding arrangements. The commission's training division area managers are now reviewing, on a scheme by scheme basis jointly with current mode B1 providers, the levels of transitional funding that would apply. It is too early to assess fully the outcome of this exercise, but it is anticipated that mode B providers will be reassured by the new terms and the individual review process. Several new incentives, including an additional allowance of £75 per month, have been incorporated into the new scheme to encourage the provision of places for disabled young people with particular training needs.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Steel Industry

36. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the steel industry in Scotland.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have nothing to add to the announcement of the British Steel Corporation's strategy which was made by my right hon. and learned Friend on 7 August, copies of which are available from the Library.

Retail Grocery

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give such information as is available

to him regarding the latest figures for the breakdown in percentage terms within the retail grocery sector for *(a)* major multiples, *(b)* other multiples, *(c)* independent stores and *(d)* co-operatives.

Mr. Butcher: The latest available official information is as follows:

Shares of retail sales of groceries and provisions, 1982

	Per cent.
Multiple retailers with 100 or more outlets*	44
Other multiple retailers*	25
Single outlet retailers*	19
Co-operative societies	12

* Excluding co-operative societies.

Source: Retailing Inquiry 1982.

Information for 1984 based on independent surveys is given in the Office of Fair Trading report "Competition and retailing".

EUREKA Project

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the six market or product areas with which the EUREKA project is concerned; and whether any of them have any military connotations.

Mr. Butcher: The declaration of principles relating to EUREKA states:

"EUREKA projects will initially relate primarily to products, processes and services in the following areas of advanced technology: information and telecommunication, robotics, materials, manufacturing, biotechnology, marine technology, lasers, environmental protection and transport technologies".

There were six areas identified by United Kingdom industry and these have been reflected in the declaration.

The declaration also states:

"EUREKA projects will serve civilian purposes and be directed both at the private and public markets".

Plasterboard

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if any controls exist on the importation of plasterboard from Spain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: There are no controls as such on imports of Spanish plasterboard into the United Kingdom, but the European Commission did accept in March this year a price undertaking offered by the major exporter of Spanish plasterboard in respect of exports to Northern Ireland, following an investigation by the Commission under EC anti-dumping regulation 2176/84.

Industrial Buildings

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received any representations in respect of covenant guarantees of industrial buildings.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. and learned Friend has not received any representations on this subject.

Insolvency Act 1985

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what dates the various provisions of the Insolvency Act 1985 will become effective.

Mr. Howard: The greater part of the Insolvency Act is designed to be brought into effect at the same time although certain of its provisions, such as those relating to the disqualification of unfit directors and the attachment of personal liability for wrongful trading, are capable of standing alone. We have yet to take final decisions on the target dates for the commencement orders, but we intend to make the orders during 1986 and advance notice will be given. A major factor determining the timetable will be the preparation of the new and revised insolvency rules which implementation of the Act requires.

English Estates

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what grounds he took the decision to reduce the grant to English Estates; and what is the sum by which he has reduced that grant.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The provision of £16 million for English Estates in 1986-87, announced in Cmnd. 9428-II in January 1985, has been increased to £19·3 million. I would also refer the hon. Member to the comments of my right hon. and learned Friend in *Hansard* on 12 November, at column *481*.

Portugal

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action has been taken in regard to proposed discriminatory Portuguese value added tax and alcohol tax legislation.

Mr. Channon: Her Majesty's Government have made firm representations to the European Commission on these issues.

Greece

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been Her Majesty's Government's response to the import measures announced by the Greek Government on 11 October.

Mr. Channon: Her Majesty's Government have expressed concern to the European Commission that the Greek measures against imports represent a major barrier to trade. I expect this concern to be reiterated when the Council of Ministers considers the measures later this month.

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has made to the European Community Commission about the delay in pursuing its infraction proceedings against the Greek Government in respect of its restrictive profit margin controls introduced in April which discriminate against, inter alia, Scotch whisky exports.

Mr. Channon: Her Majesty's Government have made representations on a number of occasions to the Commission and to the Greek authorities about Greek profit margin controls. Despite being increased in April 1985, the permitted margin on Scotch whisky is still insufficient to cover the normal promotional and other costs of importers.

EC (Regional Development Fund)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will list the amended quota ranges for the European regional development fund taking into account the accession of Spain and Portugal, together with the

quota ranges which have applied in 1985; what effect the revised estimates for the integrated Mediterranean programme will have on the availability of quota funds; what increases in the total funds for the European regional development fund are contained in the Council of Minister's draft 1986 budget; and what estimate he has made of the effect of all these factors on the total amount of quota funds available to the United Kingdom in 1986;

(2) what *(a)* nominal and *(b)* real increase in regional funds is contained in the draft 1986 EEC budget approved by the Council of Ministers; and if the increase is sufficient to cover the 1986 share of the 4·1 billion European currency units designated for the integrated Mediterranean programme without cutting the fund's existing operations as stated in Cmnd. 9627 section 1.9.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Unit Trusts

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will place in the Library a copy of the newly agreed European Economic Community directive on the liberalisation of rules relating to unit trusts; if he will specify the arrangements included to allow for the presence of exchange controls in Italy and Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The two draft European Community directives concerning unit trusts have not yet been finally agreed by the Council of Ministers because of a reservation by Denmark. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 30 October 1985, at columns 501-2 to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie).

I have placed in the Library copies of the latest drafts of the two associated directives. The first will harmonise the regulatory rules applying to unit trusts and other undertakings for collective investment in transferable securities (UCITS). The second will, by amending an existing directive, free transactions in units of UCITS from restrictions on capital movements. However, this liberalisation will be subject to the overriding provisions of the treaty of Rome which enable the Commission, on the application of a member state, to sanction the maintenance or introduction of exchange controls when a member state's economic situation justifies this. France, Ireland and Italy benefit from derogations whilst Greece —which operates under transitional arrangements—has applied for one.

I attach considerable importance to the early agreement of these two directives. They would allow a unit trust authorised in one member state to operate throughout the Community without the need for any further authorisation by other member states. This mutual recognition of authorisations would represent a significant step forward in the opening up of the internal market in the financial services sector and allow the United Kingdom unit trust industry to offer its products throughout the Community. I will be urging the industry to respond positively to this challenge. I hope that the reservation by Denmark will be removed and the directives adopted in the near future.

Chicago Pacific

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he intends to take in connection with the proposed takeover by Chicago Pacific of Hoover (UK) Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: If the proposed takeover qualifies for investigation under the Fair Trading Act 1973, my right hon. and learned Friend may refer it to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for investigation. He will decide whether to make a reference after receiving the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading.

Matthew Brown plc

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he received the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission into the proposed takeover bid by Scottish and Newcastle Breweries for Matthew Brown plc; and if he will now make a statement upon their recommendations.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on Scottish and Newcastle Breweries plc and Matthew Brown plc and to the notice issued by this Department, both of which were deposited in the Library of the House yesterday.

DEFENCE

Defence Contracts

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the present defence contracts in which there is a joint British-United States involvement; and what is the percentage breakdown of the financial costings.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Production of the Harrier GR5 (UK) and the AV8B (US) aircraft is subject to an understanding between the two nations which provides for equal production sharing of the combined national programmes through subcontracting by the two prime contractors (British Aerospace and McDonnell Douglas). Continuing support for the Pegasus engine for the GR5 and AV8B is subject to equal sharing of the cost of common development-modification work. There are no other significant bilateral defence contracts with a joint British-United States Government involvement.

UHSIC and Stealth Technology

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now supply information on the refusal of the United States to comply with agreements to supply the United Kingdom with UHSIC and stealth technology; and what is the cost of the programmes initiated by the United Kingdom in both technologies.

Mr. Norman Lamont: On the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I have nothing to add to the reply given to him on 14 June 1985 by my predecessor, the right hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Butler), at column 575. On the second part, it is not our practice to give costs of individual defence research programmes.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest available figures for those businesses recorded as owing value added tax to the Government in any one quarter and, in particular, in the following categories: those businesses with a turnover of less than £100,000, those with a turnover of less than £250,000, those businesses with a turnover of less than £500,000, those businesses with a turnover of less than £1,000,000 and those businesses with a turnover of £1,000,000 or more; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gow: For the period ended 31 August 1985: 390,149 businesses were required to pay VAT by the due date of 30 September 1985; 173,423 such businesses still owed tax 10 working days after the due date; the outstanding tax was assessed at £453 million.

The figure of £453 million is reasonably representative of the monthly value of assessments issued during this financial year. I regret that no figures are available of the amount of tax owed byb businesses according to category of turnover.

Black Economy

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has of the amount of money lost to the Exchequer through the black economy and of the impact its elimination would have on employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: Recent estimates of the size of the black economy have varied from 2 to 16 per cent. of gross domestic product. This very wide range tends to confirm the Government's view that, correspondingly, it is not possible to make a reliable estimate either of the amount of money lost to the Exchequer or of the effect of its elimination on employment.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Thailand

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what part the United Kingdom is playing in the anti-piracy programmes so far as assistance to Thailand is concerned.

Mr. Renton: The United Kingdom continues, with others, to help combat the scourge of piracy against boat refugees in the Gulf of Thailand. Since 1982 we have made annual contributions, totalling £335,000, to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for use in the Thai Government's anti-piracy programme. The incidence of piracy remains distressingly high, but since the inception of the anti-piracy programme there has been a welcome reduction in the number of incidents.

Nuclear Facilities

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list those nuclear facilities in states not party to the non-proliferation treaty that are considered a high proliferation risk by the Government.

Mr. Renton: We are concerned about any significant nuclear facility which is not subject to International Atomic Energy Authority safeguards in any non-nuclear weapon state which is not a party to the non-proliferation treaty. We are particularly concerned about unsafeguarded enrichment or reprocessing facilities in such countries. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, facilities of this kind exist or are under construction in the following countries:

Country	*Facility*
Argentina	Uranium Enrichment Plant and Re-processing Plant.
India	Re-processing plants.
Israel	Re-processing plant.
Pakistan	Uranium Enrichment Plant and Re-processing Plants.
South Africa	Uranium Enrichment Plants.

Immigration

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the current waiting time for entry clearance interviews at each of the following diplomatic posts: Islamabad, Karachi, New Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta for husbands, wives, fiancés and fiancées, separately.

Mr. Eggar: Information on the waiting time between first application and interview on 30 June for fiancés and spouses in the queues was published for the main entry clearance posts in the sub-Continent in the quarterly "Home Office Statistical Bulletin", "Control of Immigration Statistics", table 10 of issue 22/85, copies of which are in the Library of the House. At that time fiancées did not require prior entry clearance. The immigration rules and queuing arrangements were changed on 26 August. The waiting times for the groups in the new queues will not have stabilised until the end of this year.

General Summit

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the policies of Her Majesty's Government on the issues to be raised at the Geneva summit.

Mr. Rifkind: We welcome the prospect of a meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev. Contact at the highest level can make a valuable contribution to the process of creating better understanding and confidence between East and West. We hope the meeting will give impetus to the arms control negotiations in Geneva and elsewhere. We also welcome President Reagan's expressed determination to address regional questions and human rights' issues; both are sources of tension and misunderstanding, and progress on these would make its own contribution to better East-West relations.

Uganda

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on discussions with the Government of Uganda regarding the payment of compensation to former citizens of Uganda who were expelled and are currently living in Britain.

Mr. Eggar: We have made it clear to successive Administrations in Uganda that we attach importance to

their paying compensation to British nationals whose property was taken over by the Uganda Government in 1972. More than 140 properties were returned by the Obote Administration under the provisions of the Expropriated Properties Act 1982 to British nationals and companies who had applied for repossession. We have pressed both that Administration and the new authorities in Uganda also to make a start on the over 1,000 British claims for compensation under that Act. Earlier this year we gave the Uganda Government a list of 67 British claimants aged 70 years or over whom we considered merit priority treatment in view of their advanced years. The new authorities in Uganda have assured us that they will honour all Ugandan commitments. They have also confirmed that the Expropriated Properties Act remains in force.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with European Community countries on the implications for Europe of the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Renton: The strategic defence initiative has not been discussed in EC fora, but has been discussed in other fora such as NATO and the Western European Union.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the total cost of expenditure within his responsibility on the Falkland Islands since 1981.

Mr. Eggar: Expenditure on the Falkland Islands from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office vote comprises development aid, rehabilitation aid, payments under the war damage compensation scheme and costs associated with the posting of Diplomatic Service personnel to Port Stanley. In the financial years 1981-82 to 1984-85 the total cost was £28,340,000.

British Council

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to increase the funds available to the British Council.

Mr. Eggar: We cannot anticipate the publication of the Public Expenditure White Paper and the Supply Estimates.

Northern Ireland

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to announce the results of his discussions about the future of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Eggar: We cannot predict when there will be an outcome to the present discussions.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Veterinary Laboratory, Lasswade

46. **Mr. Steel** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement outlining the breakdown of the £1,425,000 expenditure in the last financial year on the veterinary laboratory at Lasswade.

Mrs. Fenner: Expenditure for the veterinary laboratory at Lasswade in the last financial year was allocated as follows:

	£'000
Staff salaries (including superannuation)*	721
General overheads	321
Accommodation	271
Equipment and supplies	113
Total	1,426

* Directly recorded

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Treaty of Rome

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library copies of all proposed amendments to the Treaty of Rome so far tabled at the intergovernmental conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave the hon. Member on 23 October, at column *180*.

Budget

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions have been held by European Economic Community Foreign Ministers concerning the draft 1986 budget, with particular reference to the cost of storing food surpluses.

Mr. Rifkind: There has been no formal discussion of the draft 1986 budget in the Foreign Affairs Council. This is primarily a matter for the Budget Council.

The cost of storing food surpluses is currently being discussed in the Agriculture Council in the context of the wider debate on the reform of the common agricultural policy.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Human Embryos (Cosmetics Manufacture)

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any evidence of the use of human embryos for the manufacture of cosmetic goods; and whether his officials will co-operate with the Council of Europe in their pursuance of this question in a European context.

Mr. Hayhoe: We are considering material relating to allegations made in the BBC television programme "Tomorrow's World" on 31 October. I understand that the Council of Europe Legal Commission has been asked by the Parliamentary Assembly to look at this general question in a European context. The United Kingdom will certainly have an opportunity to contribute to any proposals which emerge from that.

AIDS (Blood Transfusions)

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken to ensure that those whose medical condition requires them to have regular blood transfusions are no longer placed under threat by the disease AIDS.

Mr. Hayhoe: Since 14 October 1985, all blood donations collected by the national blood transfusion service (NBTS) have been tested for HTLVIII antibody. The Department has revised its warning leaflet, now entitled "AIDS — important information for blood donors", and this is being distributed by the NBTS to all its donors individually. The leaflet re-emphasises that those in AIDS high-risk groups should not donate blood.

Dunston Hill Hospital

Mr. McWilliam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why Dunston Hill hospital is being closed for two weeks in February.

Mr. Whitney: I understand that the Gateshead health authority has no proposal to close Dunston Hill hospital.

Mr. McWilliam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the report of the geriatric advisory committee of his Department into Normans Riding and Dunston Hill hospital will be made available to hon. Members.

Mr. Whitney: I understand that a copy of the joint report of the Health Advisory Service and the Department's Social Services Inspectorate on services for elderly people in Gateshead health district will shortly be published: a copy will be placed in the Library.

Mr. McWilliam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the last full inspection of Dunston Hill hospital by a properly qualified fire prevention officer was carried out.

Mr. Whitney: The Tyne and Wear county fire brigade carried out an inspection at the timber clad wards at Dunston Hill hospital in July 1985. The brigade's recommendations were accepted by the Gateshead health authority and those requiring urgent action have been acted upon. Other recommendations will be implemented as part of the upgrading programme for the whole hospital. I understand that the health authority has appointed a full-time fire prevention officer who is expected to take up post in the very near future.

Trent Regional Health Authority

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list from 1982 to date the capital developments *(a)* approved and *(b)* completed by the Trent regional health authority.

Mr. Whitney: Approval for major capital developments (those costing over £5 million) is given by the Department. A list of such major hospital schemes *(a)* approved and *(b)* completed in the Trent regional health authority in the period 1982 to date is as follows:

a. Approved
- Chesterfield and North Derby Royal hospital phase 2b
- Glenfield DGH phase 2
- Leicester Royal infirmary—phase 4b
- Northern General geriatic.

b. Completed
- Chesterfield DGH phase 1
- Glenfield DGH phase 1
- Lincoln County phase 1
- Northern General phase 1c
- Rotherham DGH phase 2

Responsibility for hospital developments costing under £5 million is wholly delegated to the regional health authority. If information on these schemes is required, I suggest my hon. Friend contacts the chairman of the Trent regional health authority.

Waltham Forest District Health Authority (Nurses' Pay)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost of the last nurses' pay rise to Waltham Forest district health authority *(a)* in the current year and *(b)* in the next full year; and if he will state the specific additional Government resources provided for this purpose in both periods.

Mr. Hayhoe: Details of the costs to individual health authorities of pay awards are not held centrally. The hon. Member may like to approach Waltham Forest health authority direct.

Resources are not allocated specifically to meet pay costs; health authorities are expected to meet pay and price pressures and fund service developments from the total cash allocated to them each year and from their growing programme of cost improvement. In 1985-86, cash allocations to health authorities in England increased by over £500 million and cost improvements worth some £150 million are planned. As regards health service funding in 1986-87, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) on 12 November at columns *162-63*.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many invalidity benefit claimants will receive no increase in their pension this month; and what proportion of the total number of invalidity benefit claimants this represents.

Mr. Major: I regret the information will not be available until later next year, but preliminary indications are that the proportion of invalidity pensioners who will get no increase in their benefit this month because their invalidity allowance is offset against their additional component will be very small.

Skoal Bandits

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to ban the tobacco-based product Skoal Bandits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: There are at present no plans to prohibit the sale of Skoal Bandits or other tobacco products in this country.

Liver Transplants

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people died because of liver failure in the last year for which figures are available; and if he will estimate the proportion who could have been saved had suitable liver and transplant facilities been available;

(2) how many *(a)* National Health Service hospitals and *(b)* private hospitals have facilities to carry out liver transplants;

(3) what change there has been in the resources devoted to liver transplant work in the National Health Service over the last two years for which figures are available;

(4) whether there has been any cutback in the beds used for liver transplant work because the health authority had insufficient resources to staff them;

(5) how many people are on the waiting list for liver transplants;

(6) if he will take steps to encourage general practitioners to refer patients with serious liver complaints to transplant centres;

(7) how many liver transplant operations were carried out in *(a)* National Health Service hospitals and *(b)* private hospitals in each of the last three years for which figures are available;

(8) if he will detail the factors that limit the expansion of liver transplant facilities in the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Hospitals (Age)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the average age of hospital buildings in England and Wales; and how this figure compares with that for the north-west region.

Mr. Whitney: Information in the table relates to the hospital building stock in England and Wales as a whole. The pattern of stock within the north-western region is not thought to vary significantly from the national picture.

Type of hospital	*Percentage of building built*				
	Post 1964	*1940-1964*	*1919-1939*	*1891-1918*	*Pre-1891*
Acute	15	10	5	68	2
Psychiatric	4	3	2	88	3
Geriatric	5	4	9	61	21
Other	7	6	8	77	2

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the number of hospitals in England and Wales that were built within the last 10 years, and in each 10-year period before that.

Mr. Whitney: One hundred and fifty-eight hospital building schemes have been completed in England and Wales within the last 10 years and 88 in the preceding 10 years. Complete details for earlier years are not available centrally.

Included in these figures are schemes costing over £1 million prior to 31 March 1978 and over £2 million thereafter. Direct comparison may therefore be misleading.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the number of hospitals in the north-western region which were built in the last 10 years and in each 10 year period before that.

Mr. Whitney: Twelve hospital building schemes have been completed in the North-Western region within the last 10 years and nine in the preceding 10 years. Details for earlier years are not available centrally.

Included in these figures are schemes costing over £1 million prior to 31 March 1978 and over £2 million thereafter. Direct comparison may therefore be misleading.

Pelvic Diseases

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what specific steps have been taken by his Department to quantify the occurrence and the causes of non specific pelvic inflammatory diseases in the under 16 age group.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Hospital Pharmacists

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give details of the salary structure of hospital pharmacists;

(2) what information he has concerning the average rate of pay of hospital pharmacists.

Mr. Hayhoe: The following is the salary structure of hospital pharmacists in England with effect from 1 April 1984:

	Salary Scale	
	Minimum £	*Maximum* £
Pre-registration graduate student	4,856	(single salary)
Basic grade pharmacist	6,699	8,438
Staff pharmacist	9,286	12,389
Principal pharmacists	12,631	17,029
	16,051	17,711
	17,020	18,681
	17,297	18,959
Pharmaceutical officers	17,020	18,681
	17,297	18,959
	17,575	19,234
	17,851	19,510
	18,127	19,787
	19,234	20,894
	19,510	21,171

An offer made in the Pharmaceuical Whitley Council on 8 November to increase all scale points by 4·7 per cent. with effect from 1 April 1985 is at present subject to consultation by the trade unions concerned.

On average, earnings of hospital pharmacists are 1 per cent. above the basic salaries listed above.

EC (Anti-poverty Programme)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all projects submitted by the United

Kingdom for the EEC second anti-poverty programme; and which of the projects were approved by the Commission.

Mr. Whitney: In answer to the first part of his question, I refer the hon. Member to my predecessor's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) on 19 July, at columns *309-13*.

A list of the projects approved by the Commission is shown in the tables.

England

a. Name of organisation *b. Title of project*	*Location of project*	*Brief description of project*
a. The Beth Johnson Foundation b. Self Health Care in Old Age	Hanley Stoke-on-Trent	To increase the ability of the *elderly* to maintain or increase their health through self-care programmes and counselling
a. Barnardo's b. Young People's Employment and Social Centre	Whitley Bay North Tyneside	To develop the ability of the *young unemployed* to improve their life-style by community work, training etc.
a. Wolverhampton Polytechnic b. Overcoming the social isolation of the long-term unemployed	Wolverhampton	To overcome the social isolation of the *long-term unemployed* through the creation of groups and networks
a. Bolton Women's Aid b. Fort Alice	Bolton	To provide marriage guidance counselling, financial guidance and care, support and personal advice for *single parent families* and *2nd generation migrants*
a. Bristol One-Parent Project b. Bristol One-Parent Action Research Project	Bristol	To draw potentially vulnerable *one-parent families* into the network of the project and to involve them as link workers to change attitudes and policies and to provide child-care
a. National Council for one-parent families b. Consultancy Action Programme	London, Wales, West Midlands, North East, North West and one other area	To provide financial expertise and training to one-parent families
a. Age Concern b. Mobile Rural Assessment and Development Unit	Lancashire	To assist deprived and dependent *elderly* people in a rural development area
a. Toynbee Hall, Universities' settlement in East London b. Sunley House Families' Centre	London Borough of Tower Hamlets	To help life chances of *2nd generation migrants* and to provide social and educational activities
a. Newham Parents' Centre b. Newham Co-operative Integration Support	London Borough of Newham	To develop mutual aid networks with special interest in the handicapped

Wales

a. Name of organisation *b. Title of project*	*Location of project*	*Brief description of project*
a. West Glamorgan Community Service Council b. West Glamorgan Valleys Development Project	Upper Valleys of West Glamorgan	To develop self-help projects for low income disadvantaged families
a. Wales Council for Voluntary Action b. Take Care	Mid-Glamorgan	To assist the *Elderly* and *Unemployed* to improve their housing conditions
a. South Glamorgan Care for the Elderly b. Hospital Discharge Scheme for the Elderly	South Glamorgan	To train selected *Unemployed* people in personal/practical skills relating to a two-tier support system for frail/disadvantaged *Elderly* people recently discharged from hospital

Northern Ireland

a. Name of organisation *b. Title of project*	*Location of project*	*Brief description of project*
Joint Project a. Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action/Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust/ Northern Ireland Rural Association b. Rural Deprivation in Northern Ireland: A Community Development Approach. A pilot Study in Rural Community Action and Mobile Service Delivery	West Fermanagh South Armagh Glens of Antrim N. Tyrone and Belfast	To establish local community development centres to draft and implement local plans of action. The provision of two rural mobiles to deliver information and advice

a. Name of organisation *b. Title of project*	*Location of project*	*Brief description of project*
a. Strabane and District Citizen's Advice Bureau b. Citizen's Advice Bureau Mobile Information and Advice Unit	Strabane	To provide a mobile CAB free advice service for disadvantaged poor people in a rural area
Joint Project		
a. Belfast Unemployed Centre b. Action-Research Project on Belfast's long-term unemployed	North and West Belfast	To generate a data-base about the *long-term unemployed* develop education and training programme
a. The Derry Unemployed Workers Group b. Perception of Poverty Study and Action Programme	Londonderry	To provide Welfare Rights and education assistance to *long-term unemployed*, including self-help

Artificial Limbs and Appliances

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the quality, reliability, variety and speed of repair of limbs supplied to his Department's artificial limb and appliance service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: These issues are among those which have been examined by the McColl working party on the artificial limb and appliance centres. As I have indicated in answer to other questions by the right hon. Member today, we expect to publish its report, with the Government's preliminary response, before Christmas.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how his Department's spending on artificial limbs and appliances compares, per thousand of the population, with that of other member states of the European Economic Community; and if any recent study has been made of comparative provision.

Mr. Newton: In 1984-85 expenditure on services provided through artificial limb and appliance centres in England, exclusive of staff costs and overheads, totalled some £64 million or approximately £1,360 per thosand of the population. Comparable figures are not available for other member states of the European Community. I am unaware of any detailed study of comparative provision in these countries, but the working party which has just completed a report on the services looked at provision in Denmark and the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if, since the report of the team appointed to review the artificial limb and appliance service, was received by his Department, there has been any discussion between the Minister with special responsiblilty for the disabled and Professor Ian McColl about whether the service should be transferred to the National Health Service;

(2) when his Department received the report of the team appointed to review the artificial limb and appliance service; if any Minister in his Department saw and commented upon any part of the report before it was formally presented; if the document will be published in full in the form in which it was presented; and when it will be published;

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will put a copy of the McColl committee report on limbs and appliances in the Library forthwith; if he will give the date when he received the final draft of the report; if he will give the reasons for the delay in publication; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will supply copies of the McColl report to those individuals and organisations who gave oral or written evidence to the committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The working party on the services recived by patients in artificial limb and appliance centres in England discussed its draft report briefly awith me in August. Its final report was received on 14 October. Arrangements are being made for it to be printed and I expect to publish it in full with the Government's preliminary response before Christmas. No decisions will be taken before there has been an opportunity for public comment, and consultation with those concerned.

Doctors, Nurses and Midwives (Derbyshire)

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the numbers of doctors, nurses and midwives in Derbyshire in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1981 and *(c)* the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: The figures are shown in the table:

*National Health Service Staff in Derbyshire**	*Whole time equivalent† 30 September*		
	1979	*‡1981*	*1984*
Nursing staff	4,970	¶—	5,520
Midwifery staff	300	¶—	310
Total nursing and midwifery staff	5,280	5,740	5,830
Doctors‖	250	270	280
Total doctors, nursing and midwifery staff	5,530	6,010	6,100

* Staff in health authorities covering the county of Derbyshire.

† Figures are whole time equivalent rounded to nearest 10. Because of rounding the sum of the component parts may not agree with the totals.

‡ In 1980 the working week for nursing and midwifery staff was reduced from 40 hours to 37½. Part of the increase in 1981 is directly attributable to this change.

‖ Includes hospital practitioners, paragraph 94 appointments and locums. Excluding consultants and senior registrars.

¶ Figures which identify nursing and midwifery staff separately are not available centrally for 1981.

Abortion Clinics

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all those non-National Health

Service hospitals and clinics which are licensed by his Department to carry out abortions after the 20th week of pregnancy.

Mr. Hayhoe: The list is as follows:

Leigham Private Clinic, London SW16
London Private Hospital, London W1
Park View Clinic, London W5
HRH Princess Christian's Hospital, Windsor
Raleigh Nursing Home, London SW2
Robert Nursing Home, Birmingham
Rosslyn Nursing Home, Twickenham
Wistons Nursing Home, Brighton

Social Security Review

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list organisations who submitted evidence in respect of his social security review who were *(a)* in support of, and *(b)* opposed to, respectively, his proposals on SERPS, housing benefit, income support, social fund, child benefit, and death grant.

Mr. Newton: No. The White Paper will cover these issues in detail, taking account of the comments received, and bodies submitting responses to the Green Paper are already free to publish them.

Human Tissue

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department has received any further information regarding a trade in human pituitary glands or foetal material as a result of the trial and conviction of Dr. Mark Patterson for conspiracy to sell blood in July 1984.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 November 1985, c. 94]: No such information has been received.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 14 November 1985

WALES

Welsh Language Education

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what consultation he had with Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin concerning the proposal to establish a Welsh language education development body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Sir. J. Stradling Thomas) met representatives of several Welsh language groups on 25 June 1985. Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin was represented at that meeting and was able to present its views on the proposal to establish a Welsh language education development body.

Music Therapy

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many music therapists there are employed by health authorities in Wales; and whether he has any plans for allocating more resources to develop such services.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No music therapists were employed by health authorities in Wales on 30 September 1984, the latest date for which information is available. It is for health authorities to plan and develop their services according to their policies and priorities and to deploy their resources accordingly.

National Health Service (Staff)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will break down by grade, sex, full and part-time staff the numbers in Wales of *(a)* radiographers, *(b)* speech therapists, *(c)* clinical psychologists, *(d)* hospital pharmacists, *(e)* medical laboratory scientific officers, *(f)* medical physics technicians, and *(g)* physiological measurement technicians.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The latest available information relates to 30 September 1984, when staff numbers were as follows:

	Full-time		*Part-time*	
Grade	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Radiographers				
Basic	37	170	1	89
Senior II	10	76	—	41
Senior I	23	74	—	7
Superintendent IV	5	11	—	—
Superintendent III	9	20	—	—
Superintendent II	3	5	—	—
Superintendent I	7	5	—	—
Teacher	1	2	—	—
Senior Teacher	4	1	—	—
Principal Teacher II	2	1	—	—
Principal Teacher I	1	1	—	—
Principal Teacher 24+	—	1	—	—
Speech Therapists				
Senior II	—	36	—	17
Senior I	1	36	—	10
Chief IV	—	4	—	2
Chief III	—	9	—	—
District Chief II	—	2	—	—
District Chief I	—	3	—	—
Clinical Psychologists				
Basic grade, probationary period	4	7	—	—
Basic grade, post-probationary period	10	6	—	2
Senior	16	12	—	6
Principal	18	5	—	1
Top grade	1	—	—	—
Top grade with greater responsibility	1	—	—	—
Hospital pharmacists				
Pre-registration students	5	12	—	—
Basic	13	42	1	16
Staff	60	53	1	7
Principal III	17	1	—	—
Principal IV	4	1	—	—
Principal V	1	—	—	—
Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers				
Junior—Scale A	6	8	—	4
Junior—Scale B	34	74	—	37
Basic	205	241	2	26
Senior	104	31	—	6
Chief	90	8	—	—

Grade	Full-time Male	Full-time Female	Part-time Male	Part-time Female
Senior Chief	30	2	—	—
Principal	3	—	—	—
Medical Physics Technicians				
Student A	1	—	—	—
Student B	1	—	—	—
Junior	4	—	—	—
Technician IV	34	4	—	2
Technician III	31	7	—	—
Technician II	24	1	—	—
Technician I	5	—	—	—
Principal	1	—	—	—
Physiological Measurement Technician				
Student A	—	2	—	1
Student B	8	26	—	1
Technician	11	56	—	17
Senior	6	39	—	2
Chief	8	14	—	—
Senior Chief	3	1	—	—

Day-care Places

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many day-care places are available for children in each Welsh authority; and what were the comparative figures for October 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The available information relates to 31 March. Figures for 31 March 1979 to 1984 are given in the table and include places provided by other registered premises or persons as well as facilities provided by the local authorities.

Number of day care places available for children

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Clwyd	178	178	205	221	236	253
Dyfed	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gwent	153	154	93	116	116	116
Gwynedd	—	—	40	60	60	60
Mid Glamorgan	127	127	127	127	145	260
Powys	10	10	10	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	492	447	385	366	338	397
West Glamorgan	40	10	44	44	130	140

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many jobs in Wales have been created in *(a)* the service sector, *(b)* the public sector, *(c)* the manufacturing sector and *(d)* the private sector so far in 1985;

(2) how many Welsh jobs have been lost in *(a)* service industries, *(b)* manufacturing industries, *(c)* private sector and *(d)* public sector so far in 1985.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information is not available in the form requested, but data on net changes in the numbers of employee in employment are provided in the Department of Employment's quarterly estimate series. These do not distinguish between public and private sector employment, but the manufacturing and service industry figure are as follows:

Thousands

	December 1984	June 1985
Manufacturing industries	207	204
Service industries	576	583

Acute Geriatric Beds

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many acute geriatric beds there are in each Welsh general hospital now; and what are the figures for the years 1979 to 1984, inclusive.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The table gives the numbers of staff beds allocated to non-psychiatric geriatric specialties in each hospital classified as acute, mainly acute and partly acute in Wales. The figures relate to 30 June 1985 and to 31 December for the years 1979 to 1984.

Hospital	Staffed beds allocated 1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Clwyd:							
Abergele	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Hospital	Staffed beds allocated 1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Catherine Gladstone	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Chirk and District	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Colwyn Bay Community	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Denbigh Infirmary	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Flint Cottage	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
H.M. Stanley	74	74	74	74	74	74	74
Holywell Cottage	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Llangollen	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Maelor General	76	76	79	79	99	96	96
Mold	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ruthin	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wrexham & East Denbigh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ysbyty Glan Clwyd	—	10	30	40	40	40	46
East Dyfed:							
Amman Valley	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bronglais General	78	78	78	78	78	78	62
Cardigan and District	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Llandovery Cottage	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Llanelli	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Wales General	107	107	107	107	107	107	107
Pembrokshire:							
Tenby Cottage	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Withybush	104	104	104	104	104	104	104
Abertillery and District	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Allt-yr-Yn	29	29	29	29	29	29	29
Blaenavon Health Care Unit	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
County	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Monmouth	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nevill Hall	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Royal Gwent	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gwynedd:							
Bryn Beryl	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Caernarvon Eye and Cottage	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dolgellau and District	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Ffestiniog Memorial	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Llandudno General	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Madoc Memorial	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
St. David's Bangor	32	32	32	32	32	—	—
Stanley Sailors	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Towyn and Distict	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Ysbyty Gwynedd	—	—	—	—	—	60	60
Mid Glamorgan:							
Aberbargoed and District	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Aberdare General	—	—	—	—	—	15	15
Bridgend General	48	48	48	48	48	48	48
Caerphilly Miners	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
East Glamorgan General	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Llwynypia	84	84	84	84	84	84	82
Llynfi	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Maesteg General	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mardy	22	22	22	22	31	22	37
Mountain Ash	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pentwyn Cottage	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pontypridd and District	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Porth and District	—	30	30	30	30	30	30
Prince Charles	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Redwood Memorial	10	10	10	10	8	10	10
Tonteg	26	26	26	26	25	25	25
Treherbert	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Powys:							
Brecon War Memorial	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Builth Cottage	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Llandrindod War Memorial	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Llanidloes and District	29	20	20	20	20	20	20
Machynlleth and District	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Montgomery County Infirmary	—	14	20	20	20	20	20
Victoria Memorial	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
South Glamorgan:							

Hospital	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
	Staffed beds allocated						
Barry Community	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cardiff Royal Infirmary	—	—	100	100	100	100	100
Llandough	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
Rookwood	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
St. David's, Cardiff	121	121	89	85	111	111	111
University Hospital of Wales	29	29	26	26	26	26	26
West Glamorgan:							
Gorseinon	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Hill House	47	47	59	47	47	47	47
Morriston	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
Neath Annexe	24	24	24	24	24	24	24
Neath General	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Port Talbot	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Singleton	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Elderly Persons (Primary Care)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many primary care teams for the elderly currently operate in Wales; and in which counties they are in operation.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The idea of teams to ensure comprehensive provision for the elderly has been advocated in a consultative document recently published by our Department. While elements of such teams already exist in many parts of Wales, I am not aware of any that involve all the components discussed in the consultative document.

Elderly Hospital Patients (Advice)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales in how many Welsh hospitals geriatric and medical advice and assistance are readily available for pre- and post-operation elderly patients.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Geriatric and medical advice and assistance are available to all hospitals in Wales.

Agricultural Advice

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether, in view of the changes now being introduced requiring farmers to pay for services received from the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service, farmers in Wales will continue to be able to receive the service and advice through the language of their choice whether Welsh or English.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Yes.

ENVIRONMENT

Private Flats

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he anticipates being able to publish the report, findings and recommendations of the committee which he established to consider problems arising over the management of blocks of private flats and matters of management, maintenance, service charges and related issues and the circumstances of long lease holders of flats whose common services are managed at their expense by an agent appointed by their landlord.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given today to my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler).

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received the report of the committee on the management of privately-owned blocks of flats, chaired by Mr. Edward Nugee, QC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I have now received the report, which is being published today, and I have placed copies in the Library. My right hon. Friend and I are extremely grateful to the committee for the work it has done and the way it has carried out its tasks. The report makes many recommendations, and we will consider these in detail as quickly as possible.

Local Government Reform (Residuary Bodies)

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will name the members appointed to the Residuary Body for Tyne and Wear, their present or former professions, and the fees they will receive.

Mr. Tracey: The information is as follows:

Tyne and Wear Residuary Body

Member and Present or former profession (on appointment)	*Remuneration to be paid (£ per annum)*
Mr. Jock Robertson *(Chairman)* Formerly chief executive, Northumbrian water authority	16,000
Mr. Kenneth Douglas Formerly managing director, Austin and Pickersgill Ltd.	5,600
Mr. Henry Foakes Formerly chief Executive, Northumberland county council	5,600
Mr. Stuart Sisterson Partner, Storey Sons and Parker, chartered surveyors	5,600
Mr. Roger Spoor Partner, Arthur Young, chartered accountants	5,600

Remuneration for the chairman is on a two days a week basis; for the other members, one. Remuneration is subject to abatement, if applicable, in respect of public sector pension received.

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will name the members appointed to the Residuary Body for Merseyside, their present or former professions, and the fees they will receive.

Mr. Tracey: The information is as follows:

Merseyside Residuary Body

Member and Present or former profession (on appointment)	*Remuneration to be paid (£ per annum)*
Mr. Leslie Pocock CBE Chairman, Liverpool district health authority	17,600
Mr. Norman Brodrick Formerly local agent, Bank of England	5,600
Mr. Duncan Forbes Formerly chairman, Booker Line	5,600
Mr. John Hill Formerly treasurer, Liverpool metropolitan city council	5,600
Mr. William Hughes Formerly director personnel and management services, Wirral metropolitan borough council	5,600
Mr. Leslie Jones Formerly superintending estates officer, Department of the Environment, north west region	5,600
Mr. Kenneth Medlock Vice-Chairman, Merseyside chamber of commerce and industry	5,600

Remuneration for the chairman is on a two days a week basis; for the other members, one. Remuneration is subject to abatement, if applicable, in respect of public sector pension received.

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will name the members appointed to the Residuary Body for Greater London, their present or former professions, and the fees they will receive.

Mr. Tracey: The information is as follows:

London Residuary Body

Member and Present or former profession (on appointment)	*Remuneration to be paid (£ per annum)*
Sir Godfrey Taylor *(Chairman)* Formerly chairman, Southern water authority	50,000
Mr. Alan Blakemore CBE Formerly town clerk and chief executive, London borough of Croydon	12,000
Mr. Jack Esling Formerly general manager, personnel, Thames water authority	24,000
Mr. Wallace Mackenzie OBE Group managing director, Slough Estates, plc	12,000
Mr. Michael Roberts Partner, Deloitte, Haskins and Sells, chartered accountants	18,000
Mr. Jack Wolkind CBE Formerly chief executive, London borough of Tower Hamlets	12,000
Councillor Peter Bowness (appointed from the London Co-ordinating Committee of successor councils) Leader of the council, London borough of Croydon	6,000

Remuneration for the chairman is on a full-time basis; for Mr. Esling on the basis of four days a week, Mr. Roberts three, Messrs. Blakemore, Mackenzie and Wolkind two, and Councillor Bowness one. Remuneration is subject to abatement, if applicable, in respect of public sector pension received.

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will name the members appointed to the Residuary Board for Greater Manchester, their present or former professions, and the fees they will receive.

Mr. Tracey: The information is as follows:

Greater Manchester Residuary Body

Member and Present or former profession (on appointment)	*Remuneration to be paid (£ per annum)*
Mr. Peter Hadfield JP *(Chairman)* Formerly chairman and managing director of Bass North West Ltd.	17,600
Mr. Kenneth Alford OBE Partner, W. H. Robinson and Co., chartered surveyors	5,600
Mr. Brian Scholes OBE Formerly chief executive, Bolton metropolitan borough council	5,600
Mr. Clifford Singleton OBE Formerly chief executive, Blackburn borough council	5,600
Mr. Robert Willan Chairman and managing director, The Willan Building and Property Group	5,600
Councillor Bernard Coyle JP (appointed from the Greater Manchester Co-ordinating Committee of successor councils) Leader of the council, Wigan metropolitan borough council	5,600

Remuneration for the chairman is on a two day week basis; for the other members, one. Remuneration is subject to abatement, if applicable, in respect of public sector pension received.

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if meetings of the Greater Manchester Residuary Body will be open to the public;

(2) if the minutes of meetings of the Greater Manchester Residuary Body will be made available to the public.

Mr. Tracey: This is a matter for the Greater Manchester Residuary Body.

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will name the members appointed to the Residuary Body for West Midlands, their present or former professions, and the fees they will receive.

Mr. Tracey: The information is as follows:

West Midlands Residuary Body

Member and Present or former profession (on appointment)	*Remuneration to be paid (£ per annum)*
Dr. Malcolm Skillicorn *(Chairman)* Corporate director, public affairs, GKN Group	17,600
Mr. Geoffrey Jackson CBE JP Managing director, Jackson of Coventry, Ltd	5,600
Mr. John Meering JP Agent, Calthorpe, Edgbaston and Elvetham Estates	5,600
Mr. William Page CBE Formerly chief executive, Birmingham metropolitan city council	5,600
Mr. Kenneth Williams Formerly chief executive and town clerk, Wolverhampton metropolitan borough council	5,600
Councillor Joseph Adams (appointed from the West Midlands Co-ordinating Committee of successor councils) Leader of the council, Sandwell metropolitan borough council	5,600

Remuneration for the chairman is on a two days a week basis; for the other members, one. Remuneration is subject to abatement, if applicable, in respect of public sector pension received.

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will name the members appointed to the Residuary Body for West Yorkshire, their present or former professions, and the fees they will receive.

Mr. Tracey: The information is as follows:

West Yorkshire Residuary Body

Member and Present or former profession (on appointment)	*Remuneration to be paid (£ per annum)*
Mr. Tom McDonald OBE *(Chairman)* Partner, Armitage and Norton, Chartered Accountants	16,000
Mr. Keith Bridge Formerly chief executive, Humberside county council	5,600
Mr. Donald Hanson Chairman and managing director, Woolcombers (Holdings) plc	5,600
Mr. Anthony Mallett CBE Formerly chief executive, South Yorkshire metropolitan county council	5,600
Mr. Roger Suddards Partner, Last Suddards, solicitors	5,600
Councillor George Mudie (appointed from the West Yorkshire Co-ordinating Committee of successor councils) Leader of the council, Leeds metropolitan city council	attendance allowance

Remuneration for the chairman is on a two days a week basis; for the other members, one. Remuneration is subject to abatement, if applicable, in respect of public sector pension received.

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will name the members appointed to the Residuary Body for South Yorkshire, their present or former professions, and the fees they will receive.

Mr. Tracey: The information is as follows:

South Yorkshire Residuary Body

Member and Present or former profession (on appointment)	*Remuneration to be paid (£ per annum)*
Mr. Bernard Cotton CBE *(Chairman)* Deputy chairman, Baker Perkins plc	16,000
Councillor Irvine Patnick OBE *(Deputy Chairman)* Leader of the opposition, South Yorkshire metropolitan county council	13,200
Mr. Malcolm Simpson Formerly director of finance, Leeds metropolitan city council	5,600
The Hon. Neil Turner Chairman, Edward Turner and Associates	5,600
Mr. Philip Wolf Formerly regional director, Manpower Services Commission	5,600

Remuneration for the chairman and deputy chairman is on a two days a week basis; for the other members, one. Remuneration is subject to abatement, if applicable, in respect of public sector pension received.

Great Grimsby (Housing)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will allocate additional resources to Great Grimsby borough council under the housing investment programme for housebuilding and modernisation; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Decisions have not yet been taken on the distribution of resources for housing investment programmes for 1986-87.

Public Rights of Way

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he will list in the *Official Report* those local authorities which have not yet modified definitive maps in existence prior to the implementation of the Wildlife and Countryside Act to indicate public rights of way, in accordance with section 53 of the Act; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) whether he is satisfied with the progress of the implementation of sections 53 to 66 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act in respect of public rights of way.

Mrs. Rumbold: We are aware that the following county councils have made orders under section 53 of the Act:

Avon	Lincolnshire
Derbyshire	Norfolk
Devon	Northamptonshire
Dorset	North Yorkshire
Greater Manchester	Oxfordshire
Hampshire	Somerset
Isle of Wight	Tyne and Wear
Lancashire	Wiltshire
Leicestershire	West Sussex

Apart from Cornwall, Cumbria and Staffordshire and the London boroughs of Bexley and Richmond, who are not yet in a position to make such orders, pending completion of the review they have in progress under the pre-1981 Act system, we have no means of knowing which of the remaining county and London borough councils have made orders, as only opposed orders are required to be submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to make any further member appointments to the London Residuary Body.

Mr. Tracey: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I have given today to the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis). I have no plans at present to make any further appointments to the London Residuary Body.

Waste Disposal Authority (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards the creation of a single London-wide waste disposal authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Section 10 of the Local Government Act 1985 does not permit final conclusions on the establishment of single authorities for waste disposal before 15 November 1985. My right hon. Friend's conclusions will be announced as soon as possible thereafter.

Rate Demands

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will place in the Library copies of responses received from local authorities to his inquiries of June 1985 concerning rate demands;

(2) when he expects to publish his new rules governing rate demands and background information accompanying them.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Rate Demands and Notice of Rates and precepts Rules 1985 (S.I. 1985/1486) were laid before Parliament on 30 September 1985 and came into operation on 22 October 1985. It is not my right hon. Friend's normal practice to place in the Library copies of responses to documents issued for purposes of consultation.

County Hall

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received during the past year concerning the listed building status of County Hall.

Mr. Tracey: Numerous representations have been received about the future of County Hall, some of which referred to its status as a listed building.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it a condition of the sale of County Hall that the war memorial be preserved.

Mr. Tracey: The future of County Hall will be a matter for the London Residuary Body to decide.

Queen Elizabeth II Centre

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what conference bookings have been received in respect of the Queen Elizabeth II Centre; and how many have been confirmed.

Sir George Young: Thirty-eight bookings have so far been made of which nine have been formally confirmed. In addition, the centre will be in constant use for Government purposes throughout the EC Presidency from July to December 1986.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the maximum booking period for the Queen Elizabeth II Centre.

Sir George Young: Two years for formal confirmation.

Major Developments (Departmental Guidance)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department gives guidance to metropolitan county councils on consultation procedures to be undertaken in advance of major developments.

Mr. Tracey: As local planning authorities, metropolitan county councils have powers, in regulations 4 and 5 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1976, to grant themselves deemed planning permission for development they intend to carry out, or which they intend others to carry out on land vested in them. The regulations prescribe the extent of the consultations to be undertaken, and authorities have been asked to give their proposals the same publicity as they would applications for similar development made by private individuals or bodies.

Lea Valley

Mr. Haselhurst asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for transferring the Greater London council's share of the costs of the Lea Valley regional park authority to the London boroughs on the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Tracey: The GLC contributes some 80 per cent. of the costs of the park authority. On its abolition this will be split between the 32 London boroughs and the City of London by way of a per capita levy. In the light of legal advice received since my right hon. Friend's announcement of 12 November 1984 [Vol. 67, c. 134] he has agreed that the six riparian London boroughs should not make double per capita contributions on abolition of the GLC. However he intends in due course to invite the various bodies concerned to consider whether legislation to change those arrangements should be promoted.

Osborne House

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he proposes to make for the discharge of his functions at Osborne House.

Mr. Tracey: The Civil Service benevolent fund now manage the convalescent home on my right hon. Friend's behalf. With the agreement of the Lord Chamberlain, my right hon. Friend proposes to direct the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England under section 34 of the National Heritage Act 1984 to exercise his remaining functions at Osborne House with effect from March 1986. The Commission will not be empowered, to make significant changes in, or additions to, the presentation of the House, its contents or the grounds to the public, without my right hon. Friend's prior approval.

Sports Council

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the Sports Council's proposed grant-in-aid for 1986-87.

Mr. Tracey: The Sports Council's grant in aid is increased for the next financial year, 1986-87, from the current £30·6 million to £37 million. This substantial increase reflects our general confidence in the effective work of the council and our support for the programme set out in its corporate plan. The allocation of the additional funds is for the Sports Council to decide, within the framework of the plan; but we expect it will need most of these funds—about £5 million—to help district and borough councils with projects of wider than local interest in the wake of the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils. Additionally, we have provided the council with about £1 million for more inner city projects, supplementing the extensive and varied work the council is already doing in these important areas, and for other new developments in hand.

The Sports Council is engaged in important objectives, in particular to boost mass participation, and especially in areas of need and stress. As for all the Department's

sponsored bodies, we look to the council under its new chairman, John Smith, to continue to strive for efficiency and value for money in all its activities.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reaffirm that, consequent on the abolition of the metropolitan county councils, metropolitan district councils will not have to pay former metropolitan county council staff they employ to run the devolved services the salary as they received formerly.

Mr. Tracey [*pursuant to his answer*, 12 November 1985, c. *120*]: Where district councils recruit staff they are free to decide the terms and conditions that they offer (ex-MCC staff may be entitled also to compensation for financial detriment; but that compensation will be paid by the residuary body not the recruiting district). Where staff are transferred by order, they retain their existing terms and conditions; but it will be for district councils to decide whether they wish to have staff transferred to them in that way.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Peterhead Prison

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will carry out an investigation into the circumstances at Peterhead prison on 21 July when a young person who was visiting his father was taken to Aberdeen royal infirmary in connection with the suspected swallowing of a controlled drug; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Mark Lynch was detained by the police under section 23 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 whilst visiting his father, William George Lynch at Peterhead prison. He was taken to Peterhead police office to be searched under section 23. He was seen to take something from his pocket and put it into his mouth. The police suspected that the article could have been drugs and they attempted to prevent him from swallowing and to recover the article but were unsuccessful. Mark Lynch was immediately taken to Peterhead cottage hospital where he was given an emetic. He vomited as a result and a compressed wad of clingfilm was found amongst the vomit. No chocolate was analysed. Mark Lynch was then detained under section 2 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 but later released.

The circumstances have been reported to the regional procurator fiscal at Aberdeen in respect of alleged criminal conduct by the police officers involved in the incident. After further investigation, the procurator fiscal has concluded that no criminal proceedings should be taken against any police officer in connection with this incident and, in this decision, my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate and I have concurred.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Retail Grocers

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the total number of independent retail grocery businesses that have closed within the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Data available from the retailing inquiries conducted by the Business Statistics Office suggest that the number of single outlet grocery retailers fell by about 20,000 businesses between 1976 and 1982 to a level of 36,000.

Design Management (Seminars)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of state for Trade and Industry whether there are plans for further seminars on design management as begun by his Department in April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The series of design management seminars held earlier this year were organised by the design management group of the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers. My Department supported them with a grant to cover a proportion of their costs. Edited proceedings of the seminars will be published in December.

I understand that the design management group is considering another event of this nature which will take place probably in autumn 1986 as part of Industry Year.

My Department is planning to hold a commitment conference for 70 company chairmen in January 1986.

Design Council

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which of the Design Council proposals submitted to him in June are planned to be introduced.

Mr. Butcher: The proposals were made by the Design Council's policy working party and the council is already taking action on many of them. My Department has helped the council to achieve this by increasing the 1985-86 grant by £500,000 to enable it to expand its regional and its education and training activities and to begin a major awareness campaign aimed at senior management in British industry and commerce.

Information Technology (Education Centres)

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy for the continued funding of information technology education centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My Department will continue to provide pump priming financial support to those information tehnology centres which remain eligible to receive it. The future funding arrangements for all ITeCs are being considered by my Department together with other Departments who have an interest in the programme.

Young Designers into Industry

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the young designers into industry bursaries scheme.

Mr. Butcher: The young designers into industry scheme is a joint Department of Trade and Industry/Royal Society of Arts initiative to provide recently graduated designers with up to a year's carefully planned and monitored industrial experience. The full quota of 12 textile design graduates are already participating in the first pilot year of the scheme. In the second pilot year, 40 graduates of textile design and industrial product design

will be involved. If the pilot years are successful, the scheme will be expanded to cover 200 students over five years. The cost of the scheme is being shared equally by my Department and private industry.

Privatisation

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) whether he will make a statement on those institutions privatised since 1979 where the rules in respect of the investor passing on entitlements in the event of death are the same as those governing the share bonus and bill voucher of the British Telecom offer;

(2) how many people he expects to be affected by the statement on page 57 of the British Telecom prospectus in respect of entitlement to share bonuses and bill vouchers of those receiving holdings in British Telecom on the death of the original investor;

(3) what representations he has received in respect of the rules made by British Telecom about the entitlement to bill vouchers and share bonuses of those left holdings in British Telecom on the death of the investor; whether he is satisfied with the rule; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The 1982 Britoil sale is the only other Government share sale in which an incentive of this type has been offered to investors. The share bonus arrangements for that sale also involved loss of entitlement in the event of the death of a sole investor. It is not possible to predict how many shareholders will be affected by these rules in the BT case. I have had few complaints. I am satisfied that the rules were both necessary and clearly set out in the BT prospectus at the time of the offer.

EUREKA Project

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on progress in the EUREKA project.

Mr. Butcher: A declaration of principles relating to EUREKA was agreed by the 18 countries participating in EUREKA and the European Commission at the Conference of Ministers in Hanover on 6 November. Agreements have been concluded on the launching of 10 EUREKA projects; three involved United Kingdom firms. Other projects, some involving United Kingdom firms, are still under discussion.

The United Kingdom has the chairmanship of EUREKA until May 1986 when we will host the next Ministerial Conference.

A copy of the declaration of principles has been placed in the Library of both Houses.

ENERGY

Gas (Safety)

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will make it his policy that elderly and disabled people living alone should be offered free safety checks on all gas appliances in the event of the privatisation of British Gas;

(2) if he will make it his policy to offer a subsidised home advisory service for the disabled customers of British Gas if the corporation is privatised;

(3) if he will make it his policy that leaflets on gas safety should be printed in all languages used by citizens in the United Kingdom in the event of the privatisation of British Gas.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Safety checks for elderly and disabled people living alone are available now from the British Gas Corporation, which also takes appropriate steps to bring safety issues to the attention of ethnic minorities. The new company will maintain the corporation's excellent safety record and continue to provide help to particular groups who may require it.

Great Grimsby

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy what initiatives have been taken by his Department to encourage the conservation of energy in public buildings in Great Grimsby.

Mr. David Hunt: Last year the Energy Efficiency Office organised a breakfast seminar on energy efficiency in Great Grimsby for 200 local senior executives, including representatives of public sector bodies.

More generally, the Energy Efficiency Office is promoting energy efficiency across the public sector in all regions. It has collaborated with the Audit Commission in devising a system to be used by latter's auditors to help all local authorities in England and Wales assess their energy use and draw up an energy action programme. It has developed a monitoring and targeting system to help local authorities control their energy use. It published, in July, a guide to good energy practice in local authorities, in which a case study by Great Grimsby borough council was featured. It has issued guidelines to help councils use contract energy management companies. It has collaborated with the Department of Health and Social Security in initiatives to improve energy efficiency in hospitals. But the final responsibility for energy efficiency in public buildings in Great Grimsby rests with local energy users and their management.

EMPLOYMENT

Local Charities (Job Creation)

Mr. Baldry asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on his recently announced policy of making money available to local charities so as to provide jobs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On 4 November, I announced that £3 million has been set aside to help charities provide up to 1,000 new jobs for long-term unemployed people, and expand their services to the community. The jobs will involve work such as help for the elderly and disabled, and caring for handicapped children.

This initiative will extend the valuable work already undertaken by voluntary organisations under the community programme. Instead of setting up specific projects, charities will be able to add additional posts to their existing organisation.

Recruits should gain very useful experience which will stand them in good stead with future employers.

The success of this experiment will be reviewed in the course of 1986.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Frank Field asked the Paymaster General what is the number of persons made redundant since May 1979 in *(a)* the Birkenhead travel-to-work area and *(b)* Merseyside; and if he will present these data on a 12 monthly basis starting at May 1979 in the form used in the answer of 14 November 1983, *Official Report*, column *316*.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information, relating to confirmed redundancies is set out below. Figures are shown for the new Wirral and Chester travel-to-work area and for the Merseyside metropolitan county.

Redundancies confirmed as due to occur from May 1979 to September 1985†*

	Wirral and Chester travel-to-work area‡	*Merseyside metropolitan county‡*
1 May 1979—30 April 1980	4,141	13,820
1 May 1980—30 April 1981	8,935	21,476
1 May 1981—30 April 1982	8,610	18,285
1 May 1982—30 April 1983	4,937	13,819
1 May 1983—30 April 1984	3,679	14,318
1 May 1984—30 April 1985	3,073	9,912
1 May 1985—30 September 1985†	1,076	3,950

* Confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur and based on notifications of impending redundancies involving 10 or more workers.
† Includes provisional figures for August and September 1985.
‡ Grouping of jobcentre areas approximating to the area.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Paymaster General if he will list the number of firms and the number of employees involved in firms which have closed since May 1979 in *(a)* the Birkenhead travel-to-work area and *(b)* Merseyside; and if he will present these for each 12 months beginning with May 1979 in the form used in the answer of 14 November 1983, *Official Report*, column *316*.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information, relating to confirmed redundancies is set out below.

Closures reported as due to occur from May 1979 to September 1985†*

	Wirral and Chester travel-to-work area‡		*Merseyside metropolitan county‡*	
	Establishments	*Redundancies involved*	*Establishments*	*Redundancies involved*
1 May 1979—30 April 1980	10	187	70	4,445
1 May 1980—30 April 1981	19	494	114	7,642
1 May 1981—30 April 1982	30	2,232	92	6,736
1 May 1982—30 April 1983	16	970	66	5,444
1 May 1983—30 April 1984	23	1,615	70	4,800
1 May 1984—30 April 1985	12	480	56	2,368
1 May 1985—30 September 1985†	8	575	18	864

* Confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur and based on notification of impending redundancies involving 10 or more workers.
† Includes provisional figures for August and September 1985.
‡ Grouping of jobcentre areas approximating to the area.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General why people who have been made redundant and are making claims at unemployment benefit offices are included in the unemployment count.

Mr. Alan Clark: Such people who have been made redundant are included in the unemployment count because they are signing on as unemployed and available for work.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General how many claimants included in the unemployment count were *(a)* sick and *(b)* disabled; and why persons who are sick but still employed are classified as unemployed.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer my hon. Friend to my replies of 29 October at columns *331* and *332*. No person who is sick but still employed should be claiming unemployment benefit.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General why men aged over 60 years who are not working are required to sign on as unemployed; and how many such persons are included in the latest unemployment statistics.

Mr. Alan Clark: Men aged over 60 years who are unemployed and available for work need to sign on at an unemployment benefit office in order to claim unemployment benefit. Men aged over 60 do not need to sign on to claim supplementary benefit or national insurance credits. In October 1985 there were 74,847 men aged 60 and over included in the count of unemployed claimants for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General how many students on vacation who intend to return to full-time education and are unemployed claimants are included in the latest unemployment figures.

Mr. Alan Clark: Students on vacation who intend to return to full-time education are excluded from the unemployment totals, but recorded separately. On 10 October 1985 there were 33,939 students claiming unemployment benefits in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General how many persons in receipt of holiday pay for a number of weeks at the termination of employment were included in the latest unemployment figures for the weeks covered by this holiday pay.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General why women who are single, widowed or separated with dependent children aged under 16 years, who do not receive unemployment benefit, are included in the unemployment figures.

Mr. Alan Clark: Such women are included in the unemployment count because they are signing on as unemployed and available for work.

Youth Training

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Paymaster General if he will explain the new rules concerning youth training scheme schemes run by voluntary organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Under the two-year youth training scheme, which will commence in April 1986, there will be a single method of funding and administration. Providers will receive a management fee of £110 per contracted place per year and a basic grant of £160 per filled place per month. Organisations—including those in the voluntary sector—which offer places for young people with special needs will receive an additional premium of £110 per filled place per month and those voluntary organisations currently involved in the youth training scheme as mode B1 providers will also be eligible for transitional funding in 1986-87 and 1987-88. Voluntary organisations providing specialised training places for disabled youngsters will receive extra payments of £75 per filled place per month on a permanent basis (but will not be eligible for transitional funding). The new administrative arrangements will give current mode B1 providers much greater freedom than at present in the management of their schemes.

The two-year youth training scheme is a major advance, in which voluntary organisations have an important role. We believe the arrangements we have made, with the agreement of the voluntary organisations, will enable and encourage them to participate fully.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement concerning the future of the Moss Side youth training scheme.

Mr. Trippier: The Moss Side training workshop at present operates in the youth training scheme under the sponsorship of the Greater Manchester council. In view of the abolition of metropolitan borough councils from 1 April next year, a new sponsor for the training workshop will have to come forward if it is to continue in the new two year youth training scheme. The Manpower Services Commission is aware of the need for high quality training in the Greater Manchester area and is urgently considering what it can do to help the Moss Side training workshop continue in operation under the new two-year scheme.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Paymaster General how many people entered youth training schemes in each local authority area in Greater Manchester; and how many people completed the scheme in mode A and mode B in the last two years.

Mr. Trippier: The table below gives details by mode of young people entering and completing the youth training scheme in each local authority district of Greater Manchester during 1983-84 and 1984-85. The figures for completions in 1984-85 include young people who started training in 1983-84 and finished their course in 1984-85. Similarly many young people entering schemes in 1984-85 will not complete their training until 1985-86.

Local authority district	*1983-84*				*1984-85*			
	*Entrants**		*Completions†*		*Entrants**		*Completions†*	
	Mode A	*Mode B*	*Mode A*	*Mode B*	*Mode A*	*Mode B*	*Mode A*	*Mode B*
Oldham	1,138	451	3	107	1,745	541	552	206
Tameside	1,074	430	—	2	1,187	423	473	177
Stockport	1,570	199	1	5	1,722	393	864	139
Bolton	1,624	481	1	44	1,943	426	876	119
Bury	839	198	4	27	928	204	370	37
Rochdale	956	661	25	56	1,040	695	388	165
Wigan	1,842	802	1	48	2,079	567	1,032	318
Manchester	2,324	1,878	10	245	3,059	1,699	1,167	585
Salford	1,090	893	15	13	1,576	938	508	352
Trafford	1,106	688	3	219	1,140	434	562	164
Greater Manchester Total	13,563	6,681	63	766	16,419	6,320	6,792	2,262

* The entrants figures include a number of young people who have joined more than one youth training scheme.
† The figures quoted for completions exclude young people who left schemes before completing their full entitlement to training.

Availability for Work Test

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General why no figures are yet available for 1984 regarding the availability for work test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: This information is now available and shows that in 1984 more than 49,000 claims for unemployment benefit were disallowed on availability grounds.

PRIME MINISTER

Peterhead

Q17. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Peterhead.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Constitutional Reform

Q28. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on the discussions with the Government of the Republic of Ireland regarding matters affecting Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland told the House earlier today, discussions between the two Governments continue but we hope that they will soon be brought to a conclusion.

Job Creation

Q63. **Mr. Freud** asked the Prime Minister which of the policies announced in the Queen's Speech is designed to have the greatest impact on unemployment.

The Prime Minister: The Gracious Speech reaffirms the Government's adherence to the policies that have led to declining inflation, sustained economic growth and the creation of over 650,000 new jobs in just over two years.

Cheap Imports

Q72. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Prime Minister what recent discussions she has had with foreign Governments about unfair competition from cheap imports.

The Prime Minister: I certainly raise this issue in bilateral negotiations as and when the need arises, but this is principally a matter for the European Community. Indeed, the Commission acts vigorously against damaging imports which have been subsidised or dumped. For example, they have recently imposed definitive anti-dumping duties on certain hydraulic excavators and ball bearings from Japan.

Ministerial Statements

Q101. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to require first drafts of ministerial statements to the House in time of conflict to be placed in the Public Record Office.

The Prime Minister: No.

Drug Abuse

Q121. **Mr. Rathbone** asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with existing interdepartmental co-ordination of the Government's efforts to tackle the problem of drug abuse and misuse.

The Prime Minister: The Government's approach is co-ordinated by the inter-departmental ministerial group on the misuse of drugs, chaired by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Home Office which I believe is proving very effective.

British Telecom (Staff Vetting)

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government have arranged for security vetting procedures to be carried out in relation to the staff of British Telecom; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Checks are carried out as necessary on persons employed in duties with security implications, but for the reasons given in my reply to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 12 November 1985 at column 103 I cannot give details.

Overseas Aid

Sir David Price asked the Prime Minister whether she will make it her policy that the amount of overseas aid provided by the United Kingdom in 1986-87 is, in real terms, not less than that provided in 1985-86.

The Prime Minister: The Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement to the House on 12 November 1985 at column 431-434 provides for an increased aid provision of £1,187 million in 1986-87; £1,230 million in 1987-88 and £1,270 million in 1988-89, compared with £1,130 million in 1985-86. This will maintain the aid programme in real terms on the basis of the forecast rate of United Kingdom inflation over the public expenditure survey period.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Prime Minister whether she is satisfied with the co-ordination between the Department of Trade and Industry and the Overseas Development Administration in the provision of overseas aid.

The Prime Minister: Yes. The Department of Trade and Industry is fully consulted by the Overseas Development Administration in planning expenditure under the aid programme, and in particular our bilateral aid. Interdepartmental machinery also exists to consider applications for support under the aid and trade provision.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Prime Minister whether she will seek to undertake an official visit to the drought-affected areas of sub-Saharan Africa.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Chieftain Tank (Iran)

Mr. Steel asked the Prime Minister upon what criteria the decision was made for the Ministry of Defence to sell Chieftain tank parts to Iran in the context of the general guidelines of Her Majesty's Government for the export of weapons to Iran and Iraq.

The Prime Minister: The spares concerned were due for supply under an existing contract, having been fully paid for prior to the 1979 Iranian revolution. The decision was therefore entirely consistent with the guidelines set out by my right hon. Friend, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary in his reply to the right hon. Member on 29 October 1985 at column *454*.

COCOM

Mr. Ashdown asked the Prime Minister what is the direct and indirect cost of United Kingdom membership of COCOM; and how many staff in total, from each Ministry, are involved in its operation.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom's contribution to the COCOM budget this financial year will be about £97,000. Time spent by officials on COCOM is equivalent to 63 full-time staff as follows:

	Numbers
DTI	31
MoD	15
Her Majesty's Customs	11
FCO	6

The indirect cost of United Kingdom membership is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Economic Alert List

Mr. Ashdown asked the Prime Minister what information she has as to the contents of the latest version of the United States economic alert list or recent versions of this list as it relates to the United Kingdom and its high technology export business; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: None.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 14 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I will be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall attend a dinner given by the Emir of Qatar.

Aid Programme

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the effectiveness of Her Majesty's Government's official aid programme.

The Prime Minister: The aid programme is effective in promoting development in the poorer countries and has the flexibility to respond to emergency situations such as the present famine situation in Africa. Aid-funded activities are carefully appraised and monitored, and are evaluated on a sample basis.

The aid programme provides considerable business for British industry. Our bilateral aid is tied to procurement in Britain except where local costs are financed, and our membership of multilateral agencies provides British firms with access to substantial overseas business opportunities. In the last three years the aid and trade provision has helped win contracts worth £1 billion: the new soft loan facility announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on November 12 will increase its effectiveness.

Aid also forms part of our wider relationships with friendly developing countries.

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister if she will state the number of public bodies in each of the past five years to which she has appointed members.

The Prime Minister: The numbers are as follows:

	Numbers
1981	18
1982	20
1983	22
1984	19
1985	18

Mr. Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Prime Minister when she last raised the case of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg with the Government of the USSR; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We have raised this case with the Soviet authorities four times in the last three years, most recently when the Minister of State, Foreign Office my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) met the Soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister in Moscow in July. Regrettably, the Soviet side has had nothing to add to its position as stated in 1957 to the Swedish ambassador in Moscow.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Human Rights

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries which have adopted the right of individual petition under the European convention on human rights and the dates at which they made their adoption.

Mr. Eggar: The countries are:

Country	Original date of adoption
Austria	3 September 1958
Belgium	5 July 1955
Denmark	13 April 1953
France	2 October 1981
Federal Republic of Germany	5 July 1955
Iceland	29 March 1955
Ireland	25 November 1953
Italy	1 August 1973
Liechtenstein	8 September 1982
Luxembourg	28 April 1958
Netherlands	28 June 1960
Norway	13 December 1955
Portugal	9 November 1978
Spain	1 July 1983
Sweden	4 February 1952
Switzerland	28 November 1974
United Kingdom	14 January 1966

STABEX

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries outside Lomé to which the EEC is willing to extend the STABEX system of export price stabilisation; and if the Council of Ministers will follow the Commission's request of extending the scheme only to countries with respectable human rights records.

Mr. Rifkind: The new European Community scheme is intended to help the least developed countries (as defined by the United Nations) which are not covered by the Lomé convention. These are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Haiti, Laos, Maldives, Nepal, the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. But in announcing the scheme at the

recent mid-term review of the substantial new programme of action in Geneva, the Community made it clear that its offer was subject to certain conditions, among them respect for human rights.

Helsinki Final Act

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a list of alleged Soviet violations of the Helsinki final act.

Mr. Rifkind We have widespread evidence of the Soviet Union's failure to live up to its commitments under the Helsinki final act, particularly in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms. A comprehensive list could not be produced except at undue expense, but various examples were set out in the reply given by my hon. Friend, the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) to my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) on 25 July at columns *683-85*.

ABM Treaty

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about alleged violations of the ABM treaty.

Mr. Renton: The United Kingdom is not a party to the anti-ballistic missile treaty. Consequently we do not participate in the standing consultative commission which was set up, among other things, to consider questions concerning compliance with the treaty. We regard the ABM treaty as an important element in preserving international peace and stability. We have accordingly urged strict compliance with the treaty by both sides. In this context, the United Kingdom has expressed its concern about the implications for the ABM treaty of the large phased array radar at Krasnoyarsk, particularly in relation to its orientation and siting.

Chile

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has held with the Chilean Government; what representations were made concerning the recently signed national accord; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: At his meeting in New York on 25 September with the Chilean Foreign Minister, my right hon. and learned Friend reminded Sr. del Valle, of the widespread interest in the United Kingdom in seeing a full and prompt return to democracy in Chile. I also refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset South (Viscount Cranborne) on 12 November at column *146*.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it remains Her Majesty's Government's policy not to provide arms to Chile which could be used for internal repression; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have made clear on many occasions that our policy is not to approve the sale to Chile of items which, in our judgment, are likely to be used for internal repression.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has held with Chile on the export of Centaur half-track vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar None. The manufacturers are aware that the eventual return to Britain of their demonstration Centaur vehicle was a condition of the issue of a temporary export licence.

Mr. Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has held with other EEC countries concerning the case of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind The case of Raoul Wallenberg has not been discussed by Ministers of the Ten in the framework of European political co-operation. We, the Swedes, and other Western Governments have raised the case with the Russians who have consistently either refused to comment or referred to their 1957 note. I doubt that the intervention of the Ten would produce any different answer.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Adoption

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the countries whose adoption laws are recognised by his Department when citizens of the United Kingdom wish to enter the United Kingdom with children whom they have adopted, and those countries from which such children are not accepted.

Mr. Waddington Adoptions made by order of a court in the United Kingdom or Islands or in one of the countries specified in the Adoptions (Designation of Overseas Adoptions) Order 1973 are recognised as valid under United Kingdom legislation. In addition, an adoption which is valid by the law of the country in which it is made may be recognised in England at common law if at the time of the adoption the adopter was domiciled in that country.

Drug-related Offences

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were serving sentences of imprisonment for drug-related offences in 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Provisional information for 1985 shows about 2,300 persons serving sentences for drugs offences (excluding fine defaulters) on 30 June 1985, as compared with 1,600 on 30 June 1984 and 1,200 on 30 June 1983.

Reparation Orders

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what respects the new reparation order being considered by the Home Office would differ from compensation orders, or from reparation schemes combined with probation orders or deferment of sentence.

Mr. Mellor: Consideration of possible new provisions for reparation in the criminal justice system are still at an early stage. My right hon. Friend is currently funding four experimental schemes in which reparation is used, and

hopes to publish before Christmas a discussion document examining such issues as the form which reparation might take.

Prison Statistics

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the prison population of England and Wales and the certified accommodation of the prison system on the most recent convenient date.

Mr. Mellor: On 8 November 1985 there were 45,227 males and 1,590 females in prison department custody. The certified normal accommodation on that date was: males—39,077, females—1,401.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison cells in England and Wales have some means of access to sanitation at night; and how many do not have such access.

Mr. Mellor: Approximately 19,400 places in prison department establishments have some means of access to night sanitation, while approximately 21,800 places do not have such access. These figures include places currently out of use for refurbishment which do not appear in the current certified normal accommodation. The available information does not distinguish between cells and other types of inmate accommodation.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were sharing cells designed for one person on the most convenient date; and how many of these had no access to sanitation at night.

Mr. Mellor: On 13 October 1985 there were 13,022 males and 250 females held two to a cell and 4,065 males and three females held three to a cell. It is estimated that over 90 per cent. of these males and over 50 per cent. of these females had no access to night sanitation. More detailed information is not available centrally.

Bail Hostels

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many places there are in bail hostels in each of the probation areas of England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: The following is the information for all types of approved hostel; about one third of the total places are occupied by persons on bail:

Probation area	*Places in approved hostels on 31 October 1985*		
	Bail hostels	*Combined bail and probation hostels*	*Probation hostels which also take persons on bail*
Avon	—	29	20
Bedfordshire	—	19	—
Berkshire	—	15	60
Buckinghamshire	—	16	—
Cambridgeshire	—	22	—
Cheshire	—	15	—
Cleveland	20	—	20
Cornwall	—	16	—
Cumbria	—	—	18
Derbyshire	—	—	17
Devon	16	—	20
Dorset	—	14	—
Essex	15	—	30
Glamorgan (Mid)	—	—	20
Glamorgan (South)	—	—	20
Hampshire	—	25	36
Hereford & Worcester	—	—	32
Hertfordshire	—	15	—
Humberside	—	19	—
Kent	—	—	52
Lancashire	14	—	41
Leicestershire	17	—	40
Lincolnshire	—	—	15
London – Inner	44	26	135
London – North East	—	—	37
London – South East	—	—	16
London – South West	14	—	—
Greater Manchester	—	27	63
Merseyside	9	—	58
Middlesex	18	—	14
West Midlands	34	14	56
Norfolk	—	—	18
Northamptonshire	—	—	39
Northumbria	9	—	19
North Wales	—	12	—
Nottinghamshire	—	—	53
Oxfordshire	12	—	—
Somerset	—	—	15
Staffordshire	12	—	20
Suffolk	—	—	32
Surrey	—	—	14
Warwickshire	—	—	30
Yorkshire – South	—	24	61
Yorkshire – West	15	—	98
Totals	249	308	1,219

Eleven probation areas have no hostel but the courts there have access to hostels in neighbouring probation areas.

Bail Verification Schemes

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many bail verification schemes similar to that established in 1975 at Camberwell Green magistrates' court are currently in existence in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: Between 1975 and 1980, 37 such schemes are known to have been set up. By 1980 some magistrates' courts had already abandoned their schemes following the introduction of the Bail Act 1976 and the establishment of duty solicitor schemes. We have no information about the number of bail verification schemes, if any, which now exist.

Probation Service

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what change in real terms in the expenditure on the probation service is anticipated between the financial year 1983-84 and the financial year 1986-87.

Mr. Mellor: The Government's published expenditure plans envisage an increase of 14·3 per cent. in real terms in expenditure on the probation service between 1983-84 and 1986-87.

Prison Service

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what increase in real terms in expenditure on the prison service is expected between the financial year 1983-84 and the financial year 1986-87.

Mr. Mellor: Expenditure on the prison service in England and Wales is now planned to increase from £548 million in 1983-84 to £701 million in 1986-87. This represents an increase of £66 million or 11·5 per cent. in real terms. The figure for 1986-87 takes into account the

additional provision announced in my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement on 12 November.

Aftercare Hostel Grant Scheme

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department at what stage voluntary organisations will be consulted concerning the conclusions of the review of the aftercare hostel grant scheme; and whether this will be before final decisions are taken on the future hostel provision.

Mr. Mellor: The fact-finding review of the aftercare hostel grant scheme has now been completed. In the light of its conclusions we have asked officials to conduct a comprehensive study of the case for devolving to the probation service the responsibility for administering and financing the present schemes of probation and bail hostels and of grant-aiding voluntary aftercare projects, and the means whereby this might be achieved. The study will involve the widest possible consultation with all those concerned, including the voluntary organisations, and it is hoped to start it shortly. No decisions will be taken on the long-term funding of hostel provision until the outcome of the study is known.

Youth Custody Sentences

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juveniles and young adults, respectively, were serving youth custody sentences in *(a)* prisons and *(b)* remand centres on the most recent convenient date.

Mr. Mellor: The latest readily available information is given in the following table. Of the trainees shown, all the juveniles and some 40 per cent. of the young adults were being held for allocation or transfer to a youth custody centre, or for other temporary purposes, or had a net sentence of less that 21 days.

Youth custody trainees held in prisons and remand centres in England and Wales on 31 August 1983 by age and type of establishment.

Number

Type of establishment	*Under 17*	*17 and over*
Remand centres	25	155
Chelmsford prison†	—	255
Other prisons	25	815
All prisons and remand centres	50	1,225

* Based on central records which are approximate
† A prison for young offenders

Immigration (Points of Entry)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all places in the United Kingdom where foreigners may lawfully enter by land, sea or air and indicate the number of immigration officers at each of them.

Mr. Waddington: All persons subject to control under the Immigration Act 1971 who arrive in the United Kingdom as passengers from outside the common travel area require leave to enter from an immigration officer regardless of the place of arrival. Those who arrive as members of the crew of a ship or aircraft may enter without that leave unless required by an immigration officer to submit to examination.

The table shows the number of immigration officers in post at ports on 31 October 1985. At other small ports officers of Customs and Excise are sometimes employed as immigration officers.

	Number
1. *Sea ports*	
Avonmouth	3
Cardiff	4
Dover east	109
Dover hoverport	14
Dover west	55
Falmouth	1
Felixstowe	13
Folkestone	34
Great Yarmouth	2
Gravesend	9
Hartlepool	3
Harwich	38
Hull	13
Immingham	3
Livepool	14
London	33
Middlesbrough	3
Milford Haven	2
Newhaven	15
Newport	1
North Shields	8
Plymouth	7
Portsmouth	17
Preston	1
Ramsgate	13
Scunthorpe	1
Sheerness	12
Southampton	24
South Shields	2
Swansea	2
2. *Airports*	
Aberdeen	5
Belfast	5
Birmingham	23
Bournemouth (Hurn)	2
Bristol	4
Cardiff	4
East Midlands	10
Edinburgh	5
Gatwick	150
Glasgow	14
Heathrow:	
Terminal 1	93
Terminal 2	146
Terminal 3	264
Leeds/Bradford	6
Luton	20
Lydd	2
Manchester	28
Newcastle	6
Norwich	4
Prestwick	6
Southend	5
Stansted	7

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice has been available to the Data Protection Registrar on the design of application forms for registration; and if he will describe the length and complexity of these forms.

Mr. Waddington: I understand that the registrar received advice on the design and layout of the application

forms from Her Majesty's Stationery Office. In addition, he consulted a large number of representative organisations and tested the forms with 100 data users; the responses from these organisations were taken into account in the final design. Copies of the application forms have been deposited in the Library.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the approximate number of applications for registration that the Data Protection Registrar is expected to receive during the six-month registration period commencing 11 November; and if he will identify and describe any other occasions in the last 10 years when an equivalent number of businesses and individuals were obliged to complete forms of similar complexity.

Mr. Waddington: Although it is difficult to estimate the likely number of registrations under the Data Protection Act the registrar's current working assumption is that he will receive about 300,000 initial applications.

It is not possible to compare the obligations imposed by the Data Protection Act with obligations imposed under other legislation since the Act deals with an entirely new area and needs to be viewed as a whole.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will estimate the approximate cost to a typical business data user of preparation for and compliance with the Data Protection Act 1984 *(a)* before successful application for registration, *(b)* after successful application and before 11 November 1987 and *(c)* annually thereafter, specifying the size and nature of the business described as typical;

(2) if he will estimate the approximate total of costs to businesses in the United Kingdom of preparation for and compliance with the Data Protection Act 1984 *(a)* up to 11 November 1987 and *(b)* annually thereafter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The costs to an individual data user of preparing for and complying with the Data Protection Act will vary depending upon the amount and nature of the data held and the circumstances under which they are held. Each user's circumstances will be different and it is not possible, therefore, to identify a business that could be described as typical. The only mandatory cost prior to 11 November 1987 will be a fee of £22 for the first three-year period of registration. After 11 November 1987 data users will be able to offset the costs of complying with subject access requests by charging a fee up to a maximum to be determind by my right hon. Friend.

An estimate of the total cost to businesses is not available and could not be obtained without disproportionate expense.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied that the Data Protection Registrar is adequately equipped with staff and resources to carry out his duties in the six-month registration period commencing 11 November; and what steps will be taken to monitor whether these resources prove to be adequate during the period.

Mr. Waddington: The resources available to the registrar are based upon current estimates of the number of applications for registration likely to be received. It is, however, very difficult to assess the likely work load of the Registrar's office and my right hon. Friend will consider sympathetically any request for additional resources should the estimates which have been made prove to be inaccurate.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information will be available to him about the performance and efficiency of the Office of the Data Protection Registrar during the six-month registration period commencing 11 November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The registrar will be monitoring very closely the performance and efficiency of his office during the initial six-month registration period and will be in close contact with Home Office officials during that time. We are satisfied that adequate information will be available to us in this way.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he plans a publicity campaign on the registration of computer users personal data banks following the commencement of the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Waddington: This is a matter for the Data Protection Registrar, who has launched a wide-ranging publicity campaign.

Wrongful Imprisonment (Compensation)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to complete his review of compensation for wrongful imprisonment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend hopes to make a statement very soon.

Data Protection (Electoral Registers)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance he gives to electoral registration officers about the implications of the first data protection principle for the circumstances in which they may sell the electoral register in machine-readable form; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: None at present, but regulations are shortly to be laid before Parliament to regulate the supply of electoral registration data. We have it in mind that, following approval of these regulations, guidance will be issued to the effect that under paragraph 1(2) of part II of schedule 1 to the Data Protection Act 1984, any data supplied in accordance with the regulations will satisfy the first data protection principle.

Jurors (Peremptory Challenge)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to prohibit agreements of any type between counsel on peremptory challenge of jurors.

Mr. Mellor: We have no present plans to do so, but I would refer the hon. Member to what my right hon. Friend said about peremptory challenges in the debate on the Address on 7 November at column 130.

British Summer Time

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he is giving to changing the present arrangements for British summer time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: A draft order in council has been laid before Parliament to continue the existing arrangements for the years 1986-1988 as proposed to the House on 29 November 1984. At the present time, the arguments for change appear to be firmly outweighed by those for retaining the status quo, but the matter will continue to be kept under review.

Mrs. Cherry Groce

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish the result of the inquiry into the shooting of Mrs. Cherry Groce.

Mr. Hurd: I understand from the Police Complaints Authority, which is supervising the investigation into the shooting of Mrs. Groce, that good progress is being made with the investigation, and that the authority expects to receive a copy of the investigating officer's report shortly. How long it will be thereafter before an announcement can be made, or the authority's account of the incident made public depends, amongst other considerations, upon whether the report discloses matters which need to be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions, and whether criminal or disciplinary charges are bought. Because of the widespread public concern, everyone involved understands the need for as early an indication as possible of the outcome of the investigation.

Law and order

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Government priorities for the maintenance of law and order.

Mr. Hurd: the Government's chief priority is to prevent crime and the disruption of public order by ensuing that the police have the necessary powers, manpower and equipment and that the courts have adequate powers to deal with those brought before them; by encouraging practical crime prevention measures; and by fostering a greater sense of individual responsibility for the maintenance of law and order.

Business voting

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce legislation to restore business voting for local elections.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Honorary Citizenship

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation creating honorary British citizenship; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: We are not persuaded of the need for such legislation.

Sentencing Statistics

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the total number of male persons over the age of 21 years who were sentenced to a custodial sentence in 1983 in which (i) they were immediately imprisoned, (ii) the sentence was partially suspended and (iii) the sentence was totally suspended;

(2) what was the total number of males over the age of 21 years who were sentenced to a period of imprisonment for summary offences during 1983.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (in volume 1 table S1.1(E)—magistrates' courts and in volume 2, S 2.1(E)—the Crown court). "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales 1984" (Cmnd. 9621) and the supplementary tables for 1984 were published on 2 October 1985.

Post Offices (Protection)

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Suffolk as to the recent incidence of attacks on village post offices in Suffolk; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the adequacy of co-operation between the various bodies responsible for the protection and security of sub-post offices in rural areas.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of Suffolk that in the period 5 July to 7 November seven offences of burglary and three of attempted burglary involving sub-post office premises have been committed in villages in the county. The Suffolk police investigation into these offences is co-ordinated with that of the No. 5 regional crime squad and of Norfolk and Essex forces, where similar offences have occurred. I am satisfied that excellent co-operation exists between the police and the Post Office investigation department, which has responsibility for security at Post Office premises, in the prevention and investigation of offences involving rural sub-post offices.

Breathalyser Equipment

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what makes of breathalyser equipment are currently being used by police forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Since the inception in 1968 of breath testing as a means of detecting alcohol in the body of a motorist the following roadside breath screening devices (hand held) have been, and remain, approved for use by police forces in England and Wales:

Device and Type	*First approval*
Alcotest 80—Bag and tube filled with reactive crystals	1968
Alcotest 80A—Bag and tube filled with reactive crystals	1975
Alcolyser—Bag and tube filled with reactive crystals	1979
Alcolmeter—Electronic	1979
Alert—Electronic	1980

The following evidential breath testing instruments have been approved for use by police in England and Wales from 6 May 1983:

The Camic Simulator and Camic Breath Analyser

The Lion Breath Simulator and Lion Intoximeter 300 Instruments for use in Scotland and Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. Friends the respective Secretaries of State.

Drink-Driving Offences

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were convicted of driving when over the limit in alcohol in 1985 to date and in each of the past four years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is for findings of guilt at all courts for offences of driving, and so on after consuming alcohol or drugs and is published in table 5 of the Home Office statistical bulletin "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, 1984" (issue 28/85). Information for 1985 is not yet available.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Security

5. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on cross border security.

Mr. Tom King: I welcome the co-operation that exists between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Garda Siochana in combating terrorism on both sides of the border. Although such co-operation at a working level is good, we intend to take every opportunity to improve it further. I also welcome close co-operation with Irish Ministers in areas where we can work together to our mutual benefit.

21. **Rev. Ian Paisley** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I would refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to a question by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux).

Salmon Fishing

15. **Mr. William Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the working of the laws covering commercial salmon fishing operations in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: All commercial salmon fishing in Northern Ireland is required to be carried out under licence during times and seasons, and deploying equipment and methods, which are prescribed in legislation. Enforcement of these laws is the responsibility of the Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland and the Foyle Fisheries Commission acting in their respective areas. Regular patrols are carried out in each area to ensure compliance with the law.

Ulster Agriculture Organisation Society

17. **Mr. Nicholson** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial assistance he proposes to make available to the Ulster Agriculture Organisation Society.

Dr. Boyson: None. I am informed that discussions are at an advanced stage with Food from Britain, whose functions include the promotion of agricultural co-operation, on the possibility of financial assistance being made available to the Ulster Agricultural Organisation Society.

Constitutional Reform

19. **Mr. John David Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the present state of the Anglo-Irish talks.

Mr. Tom King: I would refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply give to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham).

Equal Opportunities Commission

20. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage increase the Government have made in the budget of the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland to enable it to meet its statutory obligations under the Sex Discrimination (N.I.) Order 1976.

Dr. Boyson: Nine per cent. over its 1984-85 provision.

Green Areas (Building)

22. **Mr. Kilfedder** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will amend the planning legislation to seek to prevent developers building on existing green areas within urban areas.

Mr. Needham: No. Existing legislation enables planning permission to be refused if there are good reasons why development should not take place.

Health and Social Services

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what obligations are placed upon health and social services boards to provide mobility officers for the blind and visually handicapped;

(2) what obligations are placed upon health and social services boards to provide rehabilitation centres for the blind and visually handicapped;

(3) what provision for mobility officers and rehabilitation centres currently exists.

Mr. Needham: The Department of Health and Social Services has, under the provisions of the Health and Personal Social Services (N.I.) Order 1972, a general duty to provide, or secure the provision of, personal social services designed to secure the welfare of the people of Northern Ireland. This function has been delegated to the health and social services boards and it is for the boards to decide how services can best be developed in the light of their assessment of need and of the resources available to them.

At September 1985 a total of five mobility officers were in post—three in the Eastern board and one each in the Northern and Western boards. Two non-residential units providing social rehabilitation for the newly blind are in operation at Beechbank House and Helen Keller House, Belfast. The blind and visually handicapped also make use of the general rehabilitation services available at workshops and day centres provided by boards throughout Northern Ireland.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current position as to whether Mr. Colin Wallace is to give evidence to the committee of inquiry into children's homes and hostels in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter principally between the committee of inquiry, which is independent of the Government, and Mr. Colin Wallace. I understand, however, that the committee of inquiry sought to interview Mr. Wallace in order to take a statement from him, but that Mr. Wallace felt unable to take part in the interview.

Medical Cards

Mr. McCusker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many new-style medical cards have been issued by the Central Services Agency (Northern Ireland); what is the average number being issued each week; and when he hopes to have the changeover completed.

Mr. Needham: Since 1 October 1973 an estimated 1,650,000 medical cards have been issued by the Central Services Agency. On average, about 4,800 cards are being issued each week. It is not possible to say when everyone will have a card issued by the Central Services Agency, as there is no compulsion on anyone to exchange his existing card for a new one.

Driving Licences

Mr. McCusker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many driving licences issued by the Department of Environment (Northern Ireland) are currently in use in the Province.

Mr. Needham: 660,000 approximately.

Medical Staffs

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will break down by grade, sex, full and part-time staff the numbers in Northern Ireland of *(a)* radiographers, *(b)* speech therapists, *(c)* clinical psychologists, *(d)* hospital pharmacists, *(e)* medical laboratory scientific officers, *(f)* medical physics technicians and *(g)* physiological measurement technicians.

Mr. Needham: The information as at 30 June 1985 is as follows. It should be noted that medical laboratory scientific officers were formerly known as medical laboratory technicians. As both titles are still in use, an additional table has been included for the latter.

(a) Radiographers

Description and Grade	*Total*		*Full-time*		*Part-time*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Superintendent Radiographer 1	1	4	1	4	—	—
Superintndent Radiographer 2	1	3	1	3	—	—
Superintendent Radiographer 3	1	30	1	30	—	—
Superintendent Radiographer 4	3	19	3	19	—	—
Senior Radiographer 1	3	64	3	60	—	4
Senior Radiographer 2	4	74	4	52	—	22
Radiographer	7	154	7	112	—	42
Teacher Principal Radiographer 1	—	2	—	2	—	—
Teacher Principal Radiographer 2	—	1	—	1	—	—
Senior Teacher Radiographer	—	—	—	—	—	—
Teacher Radiographer	—	1	—	1	—	—
Student Teacher Radiographer	—	3	—	3	—	—
Total	20	355	20	287	—	68

(b) Speech Therapists

Description and Grade	*Total*		*Full-time*		*Part-time*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Chief Speech Therapist 1	—	1	—	1	—	—
Chief Speech Therapist 2	—	1	—	1	—	—
Chief Speech Therapist 3	1	16	1	16	—	—
Chief Speech Therapist 4	—	6	—	5	—	1
Senior Speech Therapist 1	2	41	2	31	—	10
Senior Speech Therapist 2	—	53	—	41	—	12
Speech Therapist—Graduate	—	1	—	—	—	1
Speech Therapist—Diploma	—	3	—	2	—	1
Total	3	122	3	97	—	25

(c) Clinical Psychologists

Description and Grade	*Total*		*Full-time*		*Part-time*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Top Grade Psychologist	4	—	4	—	—	—
Principal Clinical Psychologist	2	1	2	1	—	—
Senior Clinical Psychologist	8	11	8	9	—	2
Post-Probationary Clinical Psychologist	—	6	—	6	—	—

Description and Grade	Total Male	Total Female	Full-time Male	Full-time Female	Part-time Male	Part-time Female
Probationary Clinical Psychologist	—	1	—	1	—	—
Total	14	19	14	17	—	2

(d) Hospital Pharmacists

Description and Grade	Total Male	Total Female	Full-Time Male	Full-Time Female	Part-Time Male	Part-Time Female
Area Pharmaceutical Officer	2	1	2	1	—	—
Pharmaceutical Officer	1	5	1	5	—	—
District Pharmaceutical Officer	8	4	8	4	—	—
Area Pharmacist 4	1	—	1	—	—	—
Principal Pharmacist	4	6	4	6	—	—
Staff Pharmacist	12	52	12	48	—	4
Basic Grade Pharmacist	9	18	9	15	—	3
Senior Pharmacist	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	37	86	37	79	—	7

(e)(i) Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers

Description and Grade	Total Male	Total Female	Full-Time Male	Full-Time Female	Part-Time Male	Part-Time Female
Principal Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer	1	—	1	—	—	—
Senior Chief Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer	11	1	11	1	—	—
Chief Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer	42	3	42	3	—	—
Senior Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer	47	28	47	23	—	5
Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer	106	105	106	84	—	21
Junior Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer B	19	18	19	16	—	2
Junior Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer A	5	3	5	3	—	—
Total	231	158	231	130	—	28

(e)(ii) Medical Laboratory Technicians

Description and Grade	Total Male	Total Female	Full-Time Male	Full-Time Female	Part-Time Male	Part-Time Female
Senior Chief Medical Laboratory Technician	5	—	5	—	—	—
Chief Medical Laboratory Technician	21	—	21	—	—	—
Senior Medical Laboratory Technician	26	9	26	9	—	—
Medical Laboratory Technician	34	32	34	24	—	8
Junior Medical Laboratory Technician B	11	8	11	5	—	3
Junior Medical Laboratory Technician A	4	1	4	1	—	—
Total	101	50	101	39	—	11

(f) Medical Physics Technicians

Description and Grade	Total Male	Total Female	Full-Time Male	Full-Time Female	Part-Time Male	Part-Time Female
Principal Medical Physics Technician	—	—	—	—	—	—
Medical Physics Technician 1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Medical Physics Technician 2	16	3	16	3	—	—
Medical Physics Technician 3	12	7	12	7	—	—
Medical Physics Technician 4	17	5	17	5	—	—
Junior Medical Physics Technician	2	—	2	—	—	—
Total	47	15	47	15	—	—

(g) Physiological and Measurement Technicians

Description and Grade	Total Male	Total Female	Full-Time Male	Full-Time Female	Part-Time Male	Part-Time Female
Senior Chief Physiological Measurement Technician	2	1	2	1	—	—
Chief Physiological Measurement Technician	2	7	2	6	—	1
Senior Physiological Measurement Technician	9	27	9	24	—	3
Physiological Measurement Technician	9	52	9	43	—	9
Total	22	87	22	74	—	13

SCOTLAND

West Lothian Hospital

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received this year concerning the progress on construction of the West Lothian district general hospital and approval for the remaining phase.

Mr. John MacKay: Around 4,900 pre-printed postcards and 50 letters.

Legionnaire's Disease (Glasgow)

Mr. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set up a public inquiry to inquire into the outbreak of Legionnaire's disease in Glasgow.

Mr. John MacKay: Greater Glasgow health board has conducted a thorough investigation into the circumstances of this regrettable outbreak and I understand that it is fully satisfied as to the source of the infection. I do not consider that a further public inquiry is necessary.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed by the Scottish Development Agency in May 1979; and what is the latest number of employees.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In May 1979 the SDA employed some 673 people. The latest number of employees total 671.

Nurses

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average cost of *(a)* employing an agency nurse in a National Health Service hospital for one day, and *(b)* employing a National Health Service nurse in a National Health Service hospital for one day.

Mr. Younger: Average costs based on 1 April 1985 salaries for a standard working day are as follows:

	Agency nurse £	*NHS nurse* £
Staff nurse	37·50	33·97

The NHS nurse costs include elements for superannuation sickness and holiday pay.

Detention of Children

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the detention of children in police cells in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Police authorities and social work departments recognise that the detention of children in police cells is in general undesirable. The power given to the police to detain children in this way is exercised with care, and is used only where it is necessary to do so. Where a child is apprehended and is not released, arrangements exist for liaison with the relevant social work department to try to have the child placed in an appropriate place of safety.

List D Schools

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his decision to hand over responsibility for the funding of list D schools to regional authorities.

Mr. Younger: As I announced on 6 June, at column 257, in reply to the question by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) direct grants to list D schools are to be terminated from 31 March 1986. Rate support grant will, however, be increased to reflect the consequential increase in expenditure falling on local authorities.

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the managers of the schools subsequently asked that present arrangements should be continued for a further year, but I concluded that it would be preferable to follow the timetable announced in June. A number of schools have given notice of their intention to surrender certificates of approval if agreement cannot be reached with local authorities on arrangements for financial support. It is for local authorities to determine their requirements for places at the schools and to negotiate the terms of financial support from 1 April next. I understand that authorities are pursuing these matters.

Peterhead Prison

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will arrange to meet the representatives of the Scottish Prison Officers' Association and the officials of the Peterhead branch of that association to discuss the position of prison officers at Peterhead prison.

Mr. John MacKay: Officials of my Department are today visiting Peterhead where they will meet, among others, representatives of the local branch of the Scottish Prison Officers' Association. No request for a meeting to discuss the position of prison officers at Peterhead has been received from the local branch committee or from the executive committee of the association.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which an inmate of Peterhead prison was admitted to an Aberdeen hospital after the incident at the prison on Saturday 2 November when seven prison officers were held hostage by prisoners; and if he will state the nature of the medical treatment received by the prisoner.

Mr. John MacKay: Incidents at Peterhead prison on 2 and 3 November are the subject of investigations by the police. I cannot comment further on the events which occurred while these matters are under investigation.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many young people aged 18 years and under have never had a job since leaving school in *(a)* Dundee and *(b)* Scotland;

(2) if he will provide a breakdown of the numbers unemployed in Dundee and Scotland on a percentage basis as follows: *(a)* up to one year, *(b)* one to two years, *(c)* over two years and under three years and *(d)* three years and over for (i) men, (ii) women and (iii) all;

(3) if he will publish a table showing the registered number of vacancies by standard industrial classification order in Dundee;

(4) if he will provide a breakdown of the numbers of young people unemployed in Dundee in the following age groups and the following unemployment periods: *(a)* up to one year 16-year-olds, 17-year-olds and 18-year-olds, *(b)* one to two years, 17-year-olds and 18-year-olds, *(c)* over two years and under three years and 18-year-olds and *(d)* three years and over 19-year-olds and 20-year-olds.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is available in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number and percentage of those unemployed in Dundee and Scotland each month since May 1979; and what has been the percentage increase in both categories each month since May 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Information on the number and percentage of those unemployed in Dundee and Scotland is available in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the number of vacancies for the Dundee travel-to-work area for each month since May 1979 and the numbers unemployed in the Dundee travel-to-work area since 1979 for *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* young people.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Information on the number of vacancies notified to Dundee jobcentre which remained unfilled each month from May 1979 is available in the House of Commons Library. In a separate answer today I have given the number of unfilled vacancies at the Dundee careers office for the same period.

Information on the number unemployed in the Dundee travel-to-work area, on a monthly basis for men and women claimants and quarterly for young people, is also available in the Library.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the number of vacancies for young people in Dundee for each month since May 1979 and the numbers of young people unemployed in Dundee for each month since 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The table shows the number of vacancies notified to the Dundee careers office which remained unfilled each month from May 1979 to October 1985.

The information requested on the number of unemployed young people is available in the House of Commons Library.

Unfilled vacancies - Dundee careers office

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
January	—	30	4	—	1	—	
February	—	6	1	—	2	—	5
March	—	18	2	4	—	1	2
April	—	14	3	5	—	—	3
May	78	14	1	2	6	—	2
June	86	17	1	1	5	4	2
July	65	6	2	4	1	—	1
August	49	8	5	3	6	—	6
September	8	—	3	10	2	—	10
October	44	17	4	20	1	3	2
November	20	6	1	4	5	2	—
December	12	22	—	1	5	3	—

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish tables showing the number of unemployed in Dundee by age group, sex and, where appropriate, standard industrial classification of last employment.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The industrial analysis from which information was obtained by standard industrial classification of last employment was discontinued in May 1982. The latest information from the analysis is available in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs are being supported by the Government job protection and job creation schemes in Dundee.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The table shows the number of people participating in the Government's special employment measures in Dundee at 31 October.

	Number
Job release scheme	270
Young workers scheme	198
Job splitting scheme	2
Community programme	1,053
Enterprise allowance scheme	*98

* Number who entered the scheme between April 1985 and October 1985.

Company Failures (Dundee)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many companies have ceased operations in Dundee each year since May 1979; how many jobs have been lost; how many firms have notified intended redundancies; and how many jobs are involved.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Agricultural Advisory Services

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he plans to issue the consultation paper on the future structure and organisation of the agricultural advisory services in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State has arranged for the publication today of a consultation paper entitled "Agricultural Advisory Services in Scotland" for issue to interested organisations within the industry. It is hoped that constructive comments on the future of the agricultural advisory services will be received from all concerned. Copies are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

DEFENCE

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Her Majesty's Government have been consulted by the United States Government about any planned improvements to the range and capabilities of ground-launched cruise missiles based in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 11 July at column 536.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many youth training scheme places have been offered by each of the armed forces; and how many of these are filled.

Mr. Stanley: The armed services youth training scheme introduced in August 1983, is closely parallel to, but separate from, the youth training scheme administered by the Manpower Services Commission. The information requested is as follows:

	RN	Army	RAF	Totals
ASYTS Places Available				
FY 1983/84	220	1,250	287	1,757
FY 1984/85	410	1,314	573	2,297
FY 1985/86	500	957	746	2,203
Intakes				
FY 1983/84	80	442	149	671
FY 1984/85	170	153	407	730
FY 1985/86 (April to September 1985)	85	53	360	498

Body Armour

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the programme for the supply of body armour to the Army; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Various designs of combat body armour are at present under evaluation. It is hoped that a final design will enter service from 1989.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has reached agreement with the United States of America on the ownership of materials and systems developed in the United Kingdom under the SDI programme: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The United States strategic defence initiative, and hence any participation by the United Kingdom, is limited to research. Consequently, no materials or systems would be developed in the United Kingdom.

News Releases

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the numbers, titles and dates of publication of all Ministry of Defence, Royal Navy, Army, and Royal Air Force news releases for each of the years 1978 to the present.

Mr. Norman Lamont: To answer the question in the detail requested would be prohibitively time-consuming. However, the number of releases by year and service is as follows:

	Ministry of Defence	Royal Navy	Army	Royal Air Force
1978	85	93	96	107
1979	70	115	56	89
1980	65	100	77	58
1981	76	83	81	48
1982	85	88	85	66
1983	84	101	66	60
1984	71	83	43	32
1985*	63	74	36	13

* To date

These totals do not include the weekly service appointments lists sent to the *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*. Nor do they include aircraft accident summaries or releases issued by commands, districts and units.

Greenham Common (Incident)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the incident outside RAF Greenham common on 10 November when two vehicles in a cruise missile convoy were involved in accidents while returning to the base.

Mr. Stanley: There were two separate incidents on the day in question. Neither involved cruise missile launch or control vehicles. In one case, a number of United States military vehicles entering RAF Greenham common by a gate to the north of the airfield had paint thrown at them by protestors outside the gate. In an unrelated incident at the main gate at about the same time, a non-military vehicle struck the gate while entering the base. No serious damage resulted from either incident.

Military Airfields (Noise Compensation)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the review of noise compensation policy in respect of military airfields is complete; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The review of the policy of the Ministry of defence for providing sound insulation grants and compensation for noise in the vicinity of military airfields has been completed. The Government recognise that unwelcome environmenal noise is a problem that merits serious and special attention. Aircraft noise can be particularly intrusive, and military airfields pose special problems in this respect because of the type of engines used in modern combat aircraft. The review has highlighted areas where improvements can be made in the current arrangements for compensating people most affected by this noise and my noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence has now approved the introduction of policy changes to give effect to these improvements. The main changes are as follows:

(a) At present it is a condition of introducing a noise insulation grant scheme that there shall have been specific new public works undertaken since 1969 as defined in section 9*(b)* of the Land Compensation Act 1973 and that these will have resulted in an increase in noise. This condition will now be dropped, and in future all schemes will be introduced on the sole criterion of the amount of noise experienced in the area.

(b) The qualifying noise level for introducing a noise insulation grant scheme will be reduced from 75 to 70dB LAeq 12 hours, and will be applied both to new and existing schemes.

(c) Where a significant amount of night flying takes place (over 20 movements regularly), special account will be taken of maximum noise levels. In such cases the boundary of a scheme will additionally include dwellings subject to recurring maximum noise levels of 82dBA or greater.

(d) Where the size of a scheme warrants it, bulk contract methods of providing acoustic secondary double glazing to the approved standard will be used in place of individual grants to householders. This will avoid the need for householders to arrange *individual* contracts and result in overall savings.

(e) Sound insulation of a comparable standard will be provided for Service accommodation subject to similar noise levels.

These changes will be introduced progressively as soon as the necessary noise measurement surveys have been carried out and resources permit. Estimates are that in due course some 7,000 private dwellings near to the noisier airfields might qualify for insulation.

The review also concluded that the most cost-effective means of sound attenuation for normal dwellings is secondary double glazing, and that other measures, such as roof insulation, are likely to have practical installation difficulties, be expensive and would not contribute substantially to reducing internal noise levels. Although this aspect will be kept under review, the basis of Government assistance at military airfields will remain the provision of window insulation.

Finally, my noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence has also approved the establishment in the Ministry of Defence of a new post of environmental noise officer whose responsibilities will include the co-ordination of all efforts within MOD and the Services to reduce the effects of noise on the community, the promotion of research and liaison with other bodies, including universities, other Government agencies and local authorities. The person appointed, at a suitable senior level and with appropriate technical qualifications, will contribute directly to policy formulation and be expected to keep in close touch with local communities about noise levels.

I am confident that this measure, together with the policy changes announced here, will result in improvements to the noise climate around military airfields.

TRANSPORT

Motorway Lighting

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he estimates that the whole of the M1 motorway between London and the Coventry M45 turn-off will be lighted.

Mrs. Chalker: The remaining unlit section between Newport Pagnell service area and junction 16 should be lit by spring 1987.

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has reviewed the policy on motorway lighting following the recommendations of the House of Commons Transport Committee on road safety.

Mrs. Chalker: A review has been completed and I am starting consultations on a revised policy for lighting on both motorways and trunk roads. The House of Commons Select Committee on Transport will be consulted along with the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Traffic Safety, the British Parliamentary Lighting Group and bodies representing road users, local authority, lighting industry, environmental interests and professional institutions.

Motorway Accidents

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total number of accidents on the M1 in the last full year for which figures are available; and how accident levels compare with those at completion.

Mrs. Chalker: The number of fatal, serious and slight accidents on the M1 in 1984 and in 1979, the first full year which followed the completion of the M1, are set out in the table below:—

Year	*Fatal*	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*
1984	31	185	583	799
1979	27	236	537	800

Motorway Capacity

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the carrying capacity of the M1; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The carrying capacity of M1 is presently under review. Generally, the motorway meets current traffic demand except for some peak-hour capacity problems at certain junctions on the southern sections of the M1.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the cost of adding an additional lane to the M1 in each direction southbound from its junction with the M6; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: It is not possible to give a precise answer as there are many unknown factors affecting cost, such as the provision of structures and the diversion of statutory undertakers' apparatus.

However, the basic cost per kilometre for adding one lane in each direction would be likely to be of the order of £1·5 million to £2 million. The figure would be much higher for those stretches where retaining walls were needed.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to increase the capacity of the M1 southwards from its junction with the M6; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The Department's forward road programme contains no proposals for further widening of this section of M1. However, the carrying capacity of M1 is currently under review.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the design capacity of each stretch of the M1 on opening; and what is the current peak load currently carried on each of these stretches.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend will know that much of the M1 motorway was constructed during the early 1960s. Design standards have changed over the years and, because of this, it would be misleading to quote design capacity on opening. The current design capacity level for

a dual 3-lane motorway is up to 85,000 vehicles per day and for a dual 4-lane motorway up to 115,000 vehicles per day.

The current annual average daily flow of traffic on the M1 between various junctions is as follows:

	Vehicles per day (two way)
Junctions 1-4	60-70,000
4-7	70-80,000
7-10	87-120,000
10-13	70-80,000
13-15	60-70,000
15-19	50-55,000
19-24	25-40,000
24-28	35-40,000
28-30	45-50,000
30-35	37-47,000
35-39	28-37,000
39-43	35-47,000

Peak traffic flows inevitably vary from junction to junction. As a general guide however around 10 per cent. of daily traffic flow occurs during peak hours.

Woolwich Ferry

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what response he has received from the London boroughs of Greenwich and Newham to the proposal that they should take over the running of the Woolwich free ferry after the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mrs. Chalker: The borough of Greenwich has not yet made a formal response to the proposal. The borough of Newham has expressed concern about the financial implications of the proposal.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what additional financial burdens he estimates will fall on the ratepayers of Greenwich and Newham as a result of the porposed changes in ownership and management of the Woolwich-free ferry.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall write to the hon. Member shortly.

M1 Motorway (Signpost Damage)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport on what date jumction signpost number 30 on the southbound section of the M1 motorway between Wakefield and London was reported damaged; and on what date it will be repaired.

Mr. Ridley: The direction signpost at junction 30 on the southbound section of the M1 was reported damaged on 9 October and repaired on 28 October.

Taxicard Scheme

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the approximate current cost per year of the London taxicard scheme for disabled persons; and what plans he has for the continuation of this service.

Mrs Chalker: As to current costs, I suggest the hon. member addresses his question to the Greater London council who fund the taxicard scheme. As to future plans, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 11 November 1985 at column 73.

Motorways

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for transport whether he has plans to approve the construction of a fourth lane on any stretches of Britain's motorways; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We are at present constructing a fourth lane on the M4 between Heathrow airport spur and the interchange with the M25. We also have proposals in our forward programme to add fourth lanes as follows:

M6-between junctions 20 and 21a, Cheshire;

M62-eastbound Climbing Lane between junctions 21 and 22, Greater Manchester;

M62-westbound Climbing Lane, west of junction 25, west Yorkshire.

Orange Badge

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations his Department has received about the decision by some local authorities not to give automatic entitlement to an orange badge to recipients of the war pensioners' mobility supplement; if he will list the representations and the dates on which they were made; what replies have been sent; and if there is any action he proposes to take.

Mr. Ridley: The following organisations have suggested that *automatic* entitlement to an orange badge be extended to new claimants of the war pensioners' mobility supplement (WPMS) :

	Date
Council of British Service and Ex-Service Organisations	22 August 1984 (also 22 October 1984 and 4 February 1985)
Royal British Legion (Highworth and district branch) *via* the hon. Charles Morrison MP	8 July 1985
Royal British Legion (Kenilworth branch) *via* James Pawsey Esq MP	8 August 1985

Similar representations made to the Department of Health and Social Security have been drawn to my attention.

The replies have explained that WPMS beneficiaries, transferring from other mobility benefits, preserved their automatic right to badges. New claimants for WPMS are eligible to receive badges if they have permanent and very considerable difficulty in walking, but to extend automatic entitlement to them would require amending regulations.

I do not consider such amendment appropriate at the present time, but I intend to review the operation of the orange badge scheme in due course.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport which London boroughs are bidding for lead borough status in service areas currently the responsibility of the Greater London council.

Mrs. Chalker: This is a matter for the boroughs themselves.

Road Improvement Schemes

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his funding provision for road improvement schemes for the following

areas: *(a)* Hayes bypass (Hillingdon and Ealing), *(b)* Enfield north-south route (Enfield and Haringey) and *(c)* Tower Hill (historic area) Precinct (Tower Hamlets).

Mrs. Chalker: The Hayes bypass and the north-south route were accepted for transport supplementary grant in 1985-86 and we have committed ourselves to continuing to support these schemes with TSG. In addition capital expenditure on road construction not met by TSG will attract RSG block grant. I understand that the GLC hopes to complete the Tower Hill scheme before 31 March 1986.

A12 Brentwood Bypass (Crash Barriers)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress made with the installation of crash barriers along the A12 Brentwood bypass; and if a decision has yet been taken to install barriers along the whole length of the bypass.

Mrs. Chalker: Installation of central reserve safety fences along part of the bypass east of Hall lane bridge started on 17 October and is due for completion next April. Conditions on the remainder of the bypass do not at present satisfy the criteria for safety fencing but, as I promised my hon. Friend, I shall keep the matter under close review.

Tachographs

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to permit the use of tachographs as evidence of alleged speeding by coaches.

Mrs. Chalker: I do not know of any legislative barrier to the use of tachographs as evidence of a vehicle's speed. We are looking very closely at all means of controlling the speed of coaches, and I shall announce our conclusions in due course.

Buses and Coaches (Drivers)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he takes to satisfy himself as to the standards of competence of those driving coaches for charitable organisations; if he has any plans to introduce legislation requiring all such drivers to hold a PSV driver's licence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Passing the ordinary L-test, which drivers usually take in a car, cannot be regarded as a sufficient qualification for driving large coaches and buses just because the vehicles are being used non-commercially. The Government's intention is to introduce legislation, when an opportunity occurs, to require all drivers of large vehicles carrying passengers to be appropriately licensed. New drivers would have to pass what is now the public service vehicle driving test; but those with substantial recent experience of driving such vehicles would be given the opportunity to apply for the licence before the new requirement came into force.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to require all drivers of buses and coaches with more than 12 seats to hold a PSV driver's licence.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In accordance with current legislation and international conventions, vehicles adapted to carry more than eight passenges are regarded as buses; and those which are adapted to carry up to 16 passengers are treated in the United Kingdom as minibuses. Of about 130,000 buses in use, about half are minibuses. The vast majority of large buses are public service vehicles, whose drivers hold a PSV driver's licence. Only 6 per cent. of minibuses are of this kind; most of the remainder are operated non-commercially for social purposes or by individuals.

A recent study by the Transport and Road Research laboratory, "The Use of Minibuses in Great Britain" by D. A. Walmsley, found that minibuses had no more accidents than cars, and many fewer than large buses. I am considering, in the light of these findings and other factors, what needs to be said about the qualifications of minibus drivers when we come to propose changes in the legislation governing the PSV driver's licence.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many vehicles, which are not chargeable with vehicle excise duty by virtue of regulation 27 of the Road Vehicle (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 1971, are in the possession of each police authority in England;

(2) how many vehicles, which are not chargeable with vehicle excise duty by virtue of regulation 27 of the Road Vehicle (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 1971, are in the possession of each local authority in England;

(3) how many vehicles, which are not chargeable with vehicle excise duty by virtue of regulation 27 of the Road Vehicle (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 1971, are in the possession of each fire authority in England.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There are no vehicles currently licensed under this exemption.

West Midlands Light Rapid Transit System

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations the West Midlands county council had with his Department prior to arranging *(a)* the first proposed route and *(b)* the second proposed route for the west midlands light rapid transit system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department has had no consultations with the West Midlands county council on routes for the proposed West Midlands light rapid transit system, although the council has kept my Department generally in touch with their progress on the project.

Random Breath Tests

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider introducing random breath tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I am satisfied that existing police powers to require a breath test are sufficient to enable the law on drinking and driving to be enforced effectively. I have therefore no plans to propose any changes in this respect.

Drink-Drive Campaign

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider introducing drink-drive campaigns throughout the year rather than just for the Christmas period.

Mrs. Chalker: Drinking and driving is a problem throughout the year, and publicity on the subject should not be confined to the Christmas period. As a first stage, I intend that a further campaign takes place during the spring or early summer of next year.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he has decided what form his Department's drink-drive campaign will take during the Christmas period; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has for combating drinking and driving during the Christmas period; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: A publicity campaign will commence early in December and will run until the new year. Prepared in close consultation with the police, the campaign will emphasise the threat posed by the drinking driver to the safety of the public and will make clear why we need a strict law to counter this threat. It will leave no one in any doubt that the police have every intention of enforcing the law firmly, not just at Christmas but throughout the year and will remind drivers of the serious penalties they face on conviction.

A140 (Traffic Assessment)

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of the trend in the volume of traffic, particularly heavy lorries, on the A140; what information he has as to the rate of accidents on this road; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The Department does not possess sufficient information to enable it to comment on the trend in the volume of heavy lorry traffic on the A140. The estimated annual average daily flow of heavy lorry traffic in 1984 was 1090.

The number of accidents, and the accident rate, on the A140 in 1984 is given in the table below:

Number of accidents: 1984

Year	*Fatal*	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*
1984	8	67	81	156

Australia (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Thornton asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the purpose of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South's (Mr. Spicer) recent visit to Australasia; what progress was made towards greater liberalisation of the London to Australia route via Singapore; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I shall answer this question shortly.

Road Traffic Offences

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many successful prosecutions there have been in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years for the offence of riding a motor cycle whilst uninsured;

(2) how many successful prosecutions there have been in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years for the offence of riding a motor cycle without due care and attention;

(3) how many successful prosecutions there have been in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years for the offence of riding a motor cycle dangerously.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply.

The available information is shown in the table:

Findings of guilt at all courts for certain offences which were associated with motor cycles, mopeds and scooters.

England	*Number of offences*			
Offence type	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Using vehicle uninsured against third party risks.	33,700	37,800	39,000	36,700
Driving without due care and attention	11,300	10,700	8,800	7,400
Reckless driving	1,000	1,000	800	700

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the number of convictions in each of the last five years of drivers of commercial coaches and heavy goods vehicles for dangerous driving, reckless driving, and exceeding the speed limit; and what are the average penalties imposed.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply.

No reliable information is available for specific types of vehicle. The available information is for all types of vehicle and relates to findings of guilt for offences of dangerous or reckless driving, careless driving, etc., and speed limit offences (offence groups 2, 4 and 15), shown in table 5 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 28/85. Information on the sentences imposed for these offences is published annually in "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables"; summary information is given in tables 5, 7 and 8 of the latest issues and details of the fines imposed (including the average fine) and the lengths of custodial sentences given are shown in other tables. The issue for 1984 will be placed in the Library next week.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Medical Research (Expenditure)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the annual expenditure on medical research, funded by the Government during the past 10 years.

Mr. Brooke: The information is as follows:

Financial Year	*£ million (cash)*
1975-76	37·6
1976-77	42·2
1977-78	45·0
1978-79	51·3
1979-80	63·2
1980-81	80·3
1981-82	1,08·4
1982-83	1,14·4
1983-84	1,21·5
1984-85	1,25·8

The figures shown for the years 1975-76 to 1980-81 are on a different basis from those shown for later years. Before 1981-82 figures exclude the Department of Health and Social Security commissioning funds for biomedical research by the MRC because these figures cannot be

identified separately. In 1981-82 these funds were transferred to the Medical Research Council and are included in that year and the subsequent years shown.

The figures include the Medical Research Council's grant-in-aid and expenditure on medical research (other than MRC commissions pre-1981-82) by the DHSS and the Scottish Home and Health Department.

Expenditure on medical research funded by the UGC block grant in universities and medical schools, a small amount of such research funded from the DHSS health and personal social services research programme and indirect research in a number of DHSS centrally funded bodies is excluded. Information about such expenditure is not available.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his proposals to introduce distinction and merit certificates within the general certificate of secondary education examinations.

Sir Keith Joseph: In the light of the earlier consultations, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I intend shortly to bring forward for further consultation revised proposals, which will accommodate some of the points made by those consulted while seeking to promote the Government's objective of encouraging all pupils, including the ablest, to follow broad and balanced curricula. The need for further consultation means that it will not be practicable for these revised proposals for distinction and merit certificates to be introduced as soon as 1988, the first year in which GCSE certificates will be awarded.

Higher Education

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response he has received to his Green Paper on higher education, Cmnd. 9524; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has no plans to make a statement about responses to the Green Paper on higher education until the Government make the further statement of policy on higher education promised in the Green Paper itself.

Non-maintained Schools for the Deaf

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of the progress that has been made by non-maintained schools for the deaf toward meeting the requirements of section 3(2)*(c)* of part II of schedule 2 to the Education (Approval of Special Schools) Regulations 1983 by identifying those non-maintained schools for the deaf where *(a)* the governing body includes at least one member elected by parents of children at the school, *(b)* the representation of parents has been accomplished by the appointment of a parent attending the school, *(c)* the representation of parents has been accomplished by the appointment of a person who is not the parent of a child attending the school and *(d)* there is no representative of the parents; and if he will provide information on the representation on such governing bodies of teachers, deaf people, and voluntary organisations.

Mr. Dunn: Information is currently available for six of the 12 non-maintained schools for the deaf in England. Provision for the education or appointment of parent teacher or voluntary body representatives to the governing bodies of these schools is as follows:

1. *Parent Representation*

Two schools have elcted parent representatives who have a child at the school. Two schools have appointed parent representatives who have a child at the school. One school has an appointed parent with a deaf child of school age who does not attend the school.

2. *Teacher Representation*

Three schools have an elected teacher representative. One school has a representative who is a teacher of the deaf but not at that school. Two schools are at present prevented by their trust deeds from admitting teachers to the governing body. They are taking steps to secure amendments to the deeds.

3. *Voluntary Organisations' Representation*

All the schools have governors representing the voluntary body which provides the school. In addition, two schools have representatives of national deaf organisations.

Information about the representation of deaf people on governing bodies is not available in the Department.

Deaf Children

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on provision for the education of deaf children in the light of the British Deaf Association's report entitled "Raise the Standard: The Case for Improving Deaf Children's Education" and the associated declaration on the educational rights and needs of deaf children, copies of which have been sent to him.

Mr. Dunn: The Education Act 1981 requires local education authorities to secure provision in ordinary schools for children for whom they maintain a statement of special educational needs, provided that account has been taken of the views of the child's parents, and that the placement is compatible with the special educational provision required by the individual child; the provision of efficient education for the children with whom he will be educated; and the efficient use of resources.

The Department is currently reviewing the provision of special schools for hearing-impaired children, in order to match the provision of places to the likely demand, in the light of falling rolls and the increasing move towards integrated education. Some schools for hearing-impaired children will have to close as a result of the effect of declining numbers; my right hon. Friend recognises that there will be a continuing need for special schools for some children, and it is his intention that those schools should be capable of providing a suitable and efficient education.

GCSE Course (Teacher Training)

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether relevant in-service training for teachers will be completed in time for the start of the GCSE course.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Department's proposals for the special programme of in-service support for the GCSE require that all teachers should have attended preparatory briefing seminars preferably by the end of the summer term 1986 but by the end of December 1986 at the latest. Preparations for these seminars are proceeding accordingly. Local education authorities will be helped in their plans by the revised arrangements which my right hon.

Friend set out in an answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) on 12 November 1985 at column *108*.

Teachers' Dispute

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received about teachers' pay and conditions from teachers opposed to striking in order to further their current pay claim; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: Since the school teachers' disruptive action began last February, the Department has received some 7,500 letters on the subject and it has not been possible to classify the representations by author and subject. However, many teachers and one teachers' association, the Professional Association of Teachers, have made clear to me their opposition to strikes and to other and equally damaging forms of action specifically designed to cause maximum disruption of pupils' education at minimum cost to those engaging in the disruption. I recognise that many teachers have resorted to such action only with great reluctance but my respect is for those who have continued to put the interests of the children first. I look forward to a settlement of the dispute which will define the extent of teachers' professional duties, reform their career structure and facilitate improved professional development linked with more appropriate in-service training, open up greater promotion opportunities and raise pay levels for good teachers.

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the response he has made to representations made to him by parents about the consequences of disruptive action by teachers in schools.

Sir Keith Joseph: I share parents' deep concern at the damaging and inexcusable disruption being done to their children's education as a result of the industrial action being taken by members of the three largest school teacher unions. The Government's efforts have been and will continue to be directed towards a satisfactory and lasting settlement based upon improved levels of pay, a new career and promotion structure and the definition of teachers' professional duties.

THE ARTS

Arts Council

Mr. Cockram asked the Minister for the Arts when he expects to make a statement about the level of the grant to the Arts Council of Great Britain for 1986-87.

Mr. Luce: I have decided to announce the Arts Council's grant-in-aid for 1986-87 now to meet the need for the earliest possible indication of provision for the arts after abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils. Subject to parliamentary approval, the grant for the Arts Council next year will be £135·6 million. I understand that this will enable the Arts Council, in accordance with its normal practice, to enter into commitments worth nearly £137 million for the financial year.

The grant of £135·6 million is a substantial increase above both the current year's (1985-86) grant of £105 million and the provisional planning figure of £122 million originally set for next year.

Last year my predecessor announced £16 million in additional central funding for the performing arts, and £1 million for film, in the abolition areas. Since then a strong case has been made for more funding. The Government have decided to respond. I am therefore raising the £16 million to £25 million for the Arts Council and the £1 million to £1·3 million for the British Film Institute. With the £1·7 million already announced for museums, this brings the total of additional central funding for the arts in the abolition areas next year to over £43 million.

The remaining basic provision of £110·6 million for the Arts Council (a further increase on the originally planned £106 million for next year) is intended to meet other special needs which have been put to me by the Arts Council, especially to continue its strategy of regional arts development. It also includes £0·6 million of continued special support for the Scottish national companies, made necessary following changed responsibilities in local government in Scotland.

These additional sums are a demonstration of my determination to keep up the Government's support and, in particular, to give arts bodies in the GLC and metropolitan areas a good foundation on which to build. In that context I invite the districts and boroughs in those areas to give early and constructive thought to the contribution they can make to this joint venture. They have an important role to play.

So have private companies. I hope that business sponsorship of the arts will continue to grow in the abolition areas as in the country as a whole. I shall be looking to see what further action I can take to encourage this through the business sponsorship incentive scheme next year.

Some uncertainty is inevitable at the beginning of a period of transition. For this reason, I propose to give maximum help to the Arts Council in the first year. As time goes on, local authorities which have been relieved of GLC and MCC precepts should be able to increase their share. The central Government's contribution of £25 million for the Arts Council will accordingly be tapered down. It will be about £21 million in 1987-88 and about £20 million in 1988-89.

All other grants within my arts programme will be announced in a more detailed statement in December. I have not yet taken decisions on the allocation for individual arts bodies, but in overall terms the amounts available will be broadly at the levels which were allowed for in the last public expenditure White Paper and subsequently communicated for planning purposes to the bodies concerned.

NATIONAL FINANCE

British Legion Poppies (VAT)

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if there have been recent changes in the application of value added tax to the sale of British Legion poppies.

Mr. Gow: No. There is no VAT charge on poppies, nor on donations given by the public to charities.

European Monetary System

Mr. Soames asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the United Kingdom will be joining the European monetary system.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Soames asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to seek to reduce fluctuations of the exchange rate.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

EC (Expenditure)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the actual spending by the European Economic Community on all its activities in 1983 and 1984; what was the authorised spending for 1985; what is the estimated spending for 1986; and what part of the 1986 total is in respect of enlargement.

Mr. Gow: The latest information on the estimated and actual expenditure from the budgets of the European Communities for these years is set out in the table below. Expenditure is not in general hypothecated to individual countries. The Budget Council did, however, make allowance for 567 million ecu in the 1986 draft budget to provide for EAGGF guarantee expenditure in Spain and Portugal; and the Commission has proposed some 560 million ecu other expenditure in Spain and Portugal for 1986, in addition to their refunds of own resources under the transitional arrangements.

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*mecu 1986*
Budget of the European Communities	24,313	27,249	28,433	31,791

Sources: 1983 Court of Auditors annual report, December 1983; 1984 and 1985 adopted budgets of the European Communities; 1986 draft general budget.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the supplementary payments made to the European Economic Community and recently approved by Parliament to cover agricultural spending in 1985 will be included within the figures of total expenditure in agriculture for 1985 or 1986, or whether they will not be included in either total.

Mr. Gow: The supplementary payment to the European Community approved in the European Communities (Finance) Act was in respect of the Community budget for 1985. Insofar as it relates to agricultural spending it will be included in the 1985 figures for expenditure on agriculture.

Sub-Saharan Africa (Debt and Interest Repayments)

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to how much British banks receive by way of debt and interest repayments from countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Assets Sales

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table comparable with Cmnd. 9428.II, showing by programme for the years 1984-85 to 1987-88 the actual and projected proceeds of sales of land and buildings which are outside the special sales of assets programme and which are ruled off against programme totals.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 November 1985, c. *70*]: The table shows sales of land and buildings by programme for the years 1984-85 to 1987-88. They include sales by local authorities and new towns as well as central Government and are consistent with the figures published in the 1985 public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9428).

Sales of Land and Existing Buildings

£ million

	1984-85 estimated outturn	*1985-86 plans*	*1986-87* plans*	*1987-88* plans*
Defence	45	39	40	40
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	10	11	10	10
Trade, industry, energy and employment	8	12	10	10
Arts and libraries	1	—	—	—
Roads and transport	27	21	20	20
Housing	1,455	1,520	1,380	1,190
Other environmental services	478	460	430	440
Law, order and protective services	51	64	60	60
Education and science	65	70	60	60
Health and personal social services	52	62	60	60
Other public services				
Common services	16	10	10	10
Scotland	207	187	170	150
Wales	78	108	80	90
Northern Ireland	45	43	50	50
Total sales of land and existing buildings	2,536	2,616	2,380	2,190

* Rounded to the nearest £10 million following the convention in the PEWP.

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, by programme for the years 1979-80 to 1987-88, the actual and projected proceeds of public sector sales of assets outside the special sales of assets programme, but excluding sales of land and buildings.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 November 1985; c. *70*]: It is not possible to identify fully the sales of assets, other than those from special sales and sales of land and buildings, within the public expenditure figures. However, the amounts involved are likely to be relatively small.

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the assumed level of proceeds in 1985-86 to 1987-88 from asset sales retained in nationalised businesses in Cmnd. 9428-II, table 2.2 figures, in a form consistent with the form of the Chief Secretary's reply on 26 July, *Official Report*, columns *861-2*.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 November 1985; c. *70*]: Nationalised industries' forecast receipts from asset sales, included in the total internal resources figures shown in tables 5.1 and 5.5 of Cmnd. 9428-II, were as follows:

1985-86	*1986-87*	*£ million* *1987-88*
206*	76	59

* Excluding National Coal Board

It is not appropriate to publish forecast figures for individual industries because of commercial uncertainties and confidentiality.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food and Environment Protection Act

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give a timetable for consultation, publication and implementation of the draft regulations and regulations relating to part III of the Food and Environment Protection Act.

Mrs. Fenner: The timetable for implementation of part III of the Food and Environment Protection Act is set out in paragraphs 1.10 and 1.11 of the consultative document which was issued on 1 November, a copy of which was sent to the hon. Member.

Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further plans he has to investigate the chronic health effects of the pesticides triadimefon, metasystox, ioxynil and 2,4-D.

Mrs. Fenner: The safety position of all pesticides is kept under continuous review.

Of the chemicals mentioned, a detailed review of ioscynil is currently in progress.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has regarding the health effects of the pesticides triadimefon, metasystox, ioxynil or 2,4-D in respect of *(a)* teratogenicity, *(b)* carcinogenicity and *(c)* mutagenicity.

Mrs. Fenner: Companies seeking clearance for these products under the pesticides safety precautions scheme (PSPS) have been required to provide all the medical and scientific data necessary for the purpose, including data on the three elements mentioned. Clearance was granted when Departments were satisfied that, when used as recommended, the products offered no risk to public health. Additional data have recently been received in relation to ioxynil, about which I will be writing to the hon. Member.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has, and what studies he has made or plans, of the heat breakdown products of pesticides that may occur in smoke derived from agricultural straw and stubble burning.

Mrs. Fenner: None. As part of the pre-market safety clearance for pesticides, due account is taken of problems that might arise from residues. Our advice is that the level of residues likely to be present in cereals straw during and after harvest-time would be most unlikely to result in any risk during subsequent straw and stubble burning.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in revising his Department's pesticide data requirements in order to reduce animal testing to the minimum and to replace the Draize procedure.

Mrs. Fenner: Revisions to the pesticides data requirements with regard to animal testing are nearing completion and will be published shortly. Under the proposed new procedure products containing components already known to be irritating to the eye will not be required to be tested undiluted; active ingredients and formulations which are severe skin irritants, or which are strongly acidic or alkaline, may be assumed to be eye irritants and thus will not have to be tested in concentrated form; there is also a strong recommendation not to test in the eye materials known to be corrosive to skin. Furthermore, where substances of unknown irritancy need to be tested, application should be made initially to one animal only, before proceeding to a further two animals, provided it is not shown to be strongly irritant in the first animal.

Whilst these revisions should help reduce animal testing to a minimum, some in vivo testing will, I am advised, still be necessary. This is because, while in vitro methods for the assessment of severe eye irritation (as opposed to the in vivo Draize test) may be of value as preliminary screening methods for use with compounds or products for which the eye irritation potential is unknown, their ability to detect the relatively low level of eye irritation which may be caused by many pesticides has yet to be adequately demonstrated.

Sugar

Mr. Freud asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list in the *Official Report* the proportion of the United Kingdom sugar quota production used for *(a)* traditional food uses and *(b)* biotechnology in each of the last five years.

Mr. Gummer: Information on the use of United Kingdom sugar quota production for food and biotechnology purposes is not available. However, the following table shows total production within quotas, total

consumption of sugar and the use of sugar by the chemical industry. The United Kingdom market is also supplied by sugar refined by Tate and Lyle and by imports from other member states.

	Production within quota	*Total consumption*	*Tonnes (white sugar equivalent) used in the chemical industry**
1981-82†	1,092,235	2,229,300	12,641
1982-83	1,144,000	2,322,600	18,370
1983-84	1,142,189	2,237,900	16,986
1984-85	1,144,000	2,302,200	27,724
1985-86	‡1,144,000	n/a	n/a

Source: MAFF, EC Commission.

* Only sugar used in the chemical industry which has received a production refund has been included.

† July-June years.

‡ Forecast.

Mr. Freud asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration was given to potential advances in biotechnology involving sugar when drawing up the United Kingdom sugar beet quota; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The United Kingdom's beet sugar quota, like those of other member states, was derived in 1981 from production during a reference period and not from consumption or potential consumption. The Agriculture Council is currently considering Commission proposals to maintain all existing sugar quotas for the next five-year period, commencing on 1 July 1986, and to supply reduced-priced sugar to the Community's biotechnology industry. The potential increase in uptake of sugar due to advances in biotechnology is one of a number of important considerations to be taken into account during the present quota negotiations.

Mr. Freud asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list in the *Official Report* the sugar quota for each producer-member of the European Economic Community in each of the last five years; and whether he is satisfied that the latest quota for the United Kingdom is sufficient to supply sugar for traditional food uses.

Mr. Gummer: Annual sugar quotas for each member state since 1981-82 have been as follows:

	A Quota	*B Quota*
Denmark	328,000	96,629·3
Germany	1,990,000	612,312·9
France		
Metropolitan	2,560,000	759,232·8
Overseas Departments	436,000	46,600·0
Greece	290,000	29,000·0
Ireland	182,000	18,200·0
Italy	1,320,000	248,250·0
Netherlands	690,000	182,000·0
Belgium/Luxembourg	680,000	146,000·0
United Kingdom	1,040,000	-104,000·0

The United Kingdom quota and ACP raw sugar refined here provide sufficient supplies for traditional food uses. In addition, we import about 120,000 tonnes of white sugar from other member states and export a corresponding amount of domestically produced white sugar to third countries.

Salmon (North-East Drift Net Fishery)

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the reduction in the annual salmon catch of the north-east drift net fishery that will result from the measures he has now proposed.

Mr. Gummer: The measures I announced on 7 November will require the licensed fisherman to be present when his net is fished, prohibit night fishing, standardise weekend close times on the longest period now in force and change the balance of fishing effort between drift nets and fixed nets. Catches vary greatly from year to year, because of changes in the weather and other natural causes, and I cannot give a specific figure for the extent of the reduction likely to result from the new measures. It is, however, likely to be significant.

EC Budget

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much the Commission has allowed in its 1986 budget for the depreciation of intervention stocks of food and wine; whether any such provision has been made in previous budgets; and whether this sum is included within the agricultural budget for 1986.

Mr. Gummer: The 1986 draft budget provides for expenditure of 273 million ecu for the depreciation of butter stocks and 150 million ecu for depreciation of beef stocks. To our knowledge the Commission has not previously made provision in the budget for stock depreciation. These sums are included in the guarantee section of the draft budget.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the reasons for making allowance in the 1986 budget for the depreciation of European Economic Community intervention stocks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Commission's reasons for making provision in the 1986 preliminary draft budget (PDB) for the depreciation of intervention stocks are set out in pages A/18-19 of volume 7 of the European Community PDB for 1986, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

EC (Agricultural Expenditure)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the actual European Economic Community spending on agriculture in 1983 and 1984; what was the authorised total for 1985; what is the estimated total for 1986; and what percentage of each total relates to the destruction, dumping or storage of surpluses of food and wine.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of European Economic Community spending was devoted to agriculture in 1983 and 1984; and what percentage was authorised for 1985 and planned for 1986.

Mr. Gummer: Expenditure on the common agricultural policy as a percentage of the total Community budget between 1983 and 1986 is as follows:

	Per cent
1983	68·5
1984	73·1
1985 budget	73·0
1986 draft budget	68·5

Sources: EC Commission Financial Reports and Court of Auditors Reports. 1985 Budget and 1986 Draft Budget

Drainage and Flood Protection

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will publish the adjustments referred to in the document, "Investment Approach of Arterial Drainage, Flood Protection and Sea Defence Schemes (Guidance for Drainage Authorities)".

Mr. Jopling: I have today placed in the Library of the House a table which sets out broad percentage adjustments which are to be applied to the prices of the main commodities entering into drainage appraisals. These are for the use of all drainage authorities seeking grants in England and Wales from my Department or from the Welsh Office.

Investment appraisal of arterial drainage flood protection and sea defence schemes Adjustments to be applied to market prices underlying commodity gross margins

Commodity	Reduction to be applied per cent
Cereals	20
Oilseed rape	20
Beef	
Herds in severely disadvantaged areas	30
Herds in disadvantaged areas	25
Non less-favoured area herds	20
Sheep	
Severely disadvantaged areas specially qualified flocks	50
Severely disadvantaged areas qualified flocks	35
Flocks in disadvantaged areas	30
Non less-favoured area flocks	20
Milk*	—

* No adjustment is required in the case of milk because under the current regime there can be no production of milk from drained land that is additional to the national quota.

Fishery Protection

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the Government intend to make any changes in the arrangements for carrying out fishery protection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: Ministers have reviewed the arrangements for fishery protection in United Kingdom waters. They have concluded that the marine surveillance and enforcement service provided by the Royal Navy fishery protection squadron, which complements other naval tasks, should remain with the Royal Navy. Aerial surveillance, when the role is more observation and collection of information rather than direct enforcement, can be carried out effectively and at lower cost by using civilian aircraft of a lighter type than the RAF Nimrods at present employed on this task. In consequence, the use of the Nimrods will be phased out as soon as arrangements can be made for the employment of suitable civilian aircraft.

The rest of the fishery protection arrangements operated by the fisheries departments will remain as before, with inshore aerial surveillance provided by civilian aircraft under their control, port-based inspection and control provided by their sea fisheries inspectorates and the fleet operated by the Scottish Department of Agriculture and Fisheries remaining responsible for marine surveillance and enforcement in a large part of the waters around Scotland.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Medical Services Committees

Mr. Cyril Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make the reports of medical services committee hearings, which he receives from family practitioner committees, routinely available to the medical press and to family practitioner committee administrators, and chairmen of medical services committees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: No. The service committee regulations require that service committee reports should be sent to the parties to the investigation and to the Secretary of State. The reports can often contain details of a confidential and personal nature. i do not think that it would be in the interests of either the patient or the practitioner for the report to be circulated in the way suggested.

Mr. Cyril Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for the most recent years for which statistics are available, for each family practitioner committee in the north west region *(a)* the number of complaints referred initially to an informal procedure; *(b)* the number of complaints under *(a)* above which were eventually referred to a medical services committee, *(c)* the total number of medical services committee hearings, *(d)* the number of appeals lodged with him against medical services committee decisions (i) by general practitioners, (ii) by complainants, *(e)* in *(d)*(i) and (ii) above the number of cases which were successfully appealed either with or without an appeal hearing and *(f)* give the estimated populations relevant to each family practitioner committee area listed in the answers, as they existed at the date of the statistics.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not available.

Visually Handicapped People (Computer Technology)

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps his Department is taking to encourage and promote the use of computer technology by and for the blind and visually handicapped.

Mr. Newton: The Department maintains a close watch on developments in this field, and is ready to give support and encouragement when appropriate. We also liaise closely with the Department of Trade and Industry, which has provided a number of computer projects for blind and visually handicapped people as part of the information technology awareness programme, and with the Manpoer Services Commission, which is able to provide a wide range of technological aids through the aids to employment scheme.

Commission for Racial Equality (Code of Practice)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the reason for the delay in giving advice to National Health Service employees on the implementation of the Commission for Racial Equality's code of practice; when this was approved by the Government; what attention has been paid to the Commission for Racial Equality's report on the National Health Service; and what representations he has received from the General Whitley Council staff on advice being given to National Health Service employees on this matter.

Mr. Hayhoe: The code of practice on race relations was approved by the Government in March 1984 to come into effect on 1 April 1984. The chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality wrote to chairmen of all health authorities in November 1983 drawing their attention to the code of practice and consultation after 1 April suggested that health authorities were well aware of their responsibilities. The need for immediate advice did not, therefore, arise. The Commission's report on "Ethnic Minority Hospital Staff" has also had wide circulation within the National Health Service. The staff side of the General Whitley Council has expressed its concern that some action should flow from this report and the code of practice and I am currently considering its representations.

Child Care

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, of the 63 applications for freeing orders made in the period from May 1984 to March 1985, if he will state *(a)* how many of these were in respect of children in local authority care, *(b)* the ages of the children involved in these applications and *(c)* the ages of the children in the five cases where one parent's agreement to adoption was dispensed with.

Mr. Whitney: I remind the hon. Member that the figures he quotes were given to him in August on a provisional basis only. Detailed analyses of information relating to adoptions in the period May 1984 to March 1985 are not yet available. It is hoped that some information in respect of the year 1984 will be available in the new year. I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as information is available.

National Health Service

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the total number of patients treated within the National Health Service in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1983 and at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: Information on individual patients treated is not available centrally. The available information on the main hospital services is given in the table:

NHS Hospitals, England *(Thousands)*

	1974	*1979*	*1983*	*1984*
Inpatient cases	5,172	5,400	6,019	6,178
Day cases	450	592	813	903
Total outpatient attendances	33,352	34,100	36,520	37,043
Total Accident and emergency attendances	12,921	13,219	13,603	13,769

Private Health Insurance

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is able to estimate the numbers of persons subscribing to private health insurance schemes in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1983 and at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is estimated that the number of people subscribing to private medical insurance in the United Kingdom at 31 December each year was 1·1 million in 1974, 1·3 million in 1979, 2·2 million in 1983, and 2·3 million in 1984.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons are currently in receipt of invalidity pension; and of these what percentage is required to pay prescription charges.

Mr. Major: At 2 April 1983, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 737,000 invalidity pensioners of whom 61,500 were over minimum pension age. In December 1983, there were 67,000 invalidity pensioners who were also in receipt of supplementary allowance. In 1983 there were therefore at least 128,500 invalidity pensioners eligible for free prescriptions. In addition, other invalidity pensioners may qualify, eg. on the grounds of low income or because they suffer from specified medical conditions which exempt them from charges, but I regret that these figures are not available.

Needs Allowance

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to alter the long-term scale needs allowances for supplementary benefit.

Mr. Newton: The recent Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" proposed a new structure of income support with client group premiums for particular groups of claimants instead of the present system, including the long-term rate.

Health Visitors

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the current national provisions for the training of health visitors; and what national provision is made for the standardised retraining of qualified health visitors who have left the profession for some time and are then re-employed as health visitors.

Mr. Hayhoe: A total of 36 institutions in England provide courses for the training of health visitors. Several of these also offer courses for field ward teachers and assessors of supervised practice. Five institutions offer integrated degree programmes.

Short English National Board approved courses for qualified health visitors wishing to return to professional practice are offered by the Health Visitors Association. Two such courses are currently available. For other health visitor re-entrants to the profession re-orientation programmes are arranged on an individual basis by the employing health authority.

Hospital Radios

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidelines his Department lays down for the provision of facilities for hospital radios within hospitals.

Mr. Whitney: Health authorities have been advised that radio and other sound facilities providing a choice of five channels should be relayed from central equipment to all bedhead units. It is for individual authorities to decide what facilities should be provided for those who wish to produce programmes locally.

Orange Badge Scheme

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations Ministers in his Department have *(a)* received and *(b)* made about the decision by some local authorities not to give automatic entitlement to an orange badge to recipients of the war pensioners' mobility supplement; and what action has been taken in this regard.

Mr. Major: Ministers in this Department have received a number of representations on this matter from individual war pensioners and from organisations representing them. My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with special responsibility for war pension matters—and her noble predecessor—drew these to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Transport who has responsibility for the orange badge scheme.

Contraceptives

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what procedure is currently utilised by his Department to monitor and arrange for the payment of special fees for doctors who prescribe contraceptive drugs or devices.

Mr. Hayhoe: Family practitioner committees are responsible for checking general medical practitioners' claims for contraceptive services fees an for making payments in accordance with the provisions in the general medical practitioners' statement of fees and allowances. The prescribing of contraceptive substances would not necessarily be appropriate in all cases.

Hospital Pharmacy Service

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has concerning the average number of occasions upon which the hospital pharmacy emergency on call service is used in each health district;

(2) whether he proposes to make provision for payments to hospital pharmacists for providing an out of hours service.

Mr. Hayhoe: Information in statistical form is not held centrally. I understand that the need to call on hospital pharmacists out of hours varies widely. Arrangements governing payment for out of hours services are a matter for negotiation in the pharmacuetical Whitley Council and this subject is on the agenda for a meeting on 6 December 1985.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the number of hospital pharmacists currently employed in each health district; and what is the ratio of hospital pharmacists to hospital patients treated annually in each of those districts.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Heart Disease (Exhibition)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to the prevention of heart disease to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am glad to report that arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 16-20 December.

Electoral Statistics

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the 30 English non-metropolitan districts which have shown the greatest percentage growth in their electorate since 1980; and what has been the percentage growth and actual figures in each case.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is as follows:

Non-Metropolitan County-District (ranked by percentage growth)	*Electorate*		*1980-85 Growth*	
	1980 Register	*1985 Register*	*Increase in Electorate*	*Percentage increase*
Milton Keynes	79,816	103,938	24,122	30·2
Wokingham	79,123	95,014	15,891	20·1
Crawley	55,595	64,681	9,086	16·3
Bracknell	55,515	64,166	8,651	15·6
Thamesdown	104,509	119,293	14,784	14·1
Redditch	44,904	51,189	6,285	14·0
Wimborne	53,440	60,344	6,904	12·9
Basingstoke and Deane	90,810	102,286	11,476	12·6
Peterborough	91,655	103,064	11,409	12·4
East Hampshire	64,452	72,087	7,635	11·8
Eastleigh	67,598	75,579	7,981	11·8
Huntingdon	82,478	92,156	9,678	11·7
Northampton	112,203	125,244	13,041	11·6
Tamworth	42,597	47,477	4,880	11·5
Cherwell	71,778	79,881	8,103	11·3
Chelmsford	100,762	111,874	11,112	11·0
Hart	52,038	57,755	5,717	11·0

Non-Metropolitan County-District (ranked by percentage growth)	Electorate 1980 Register	Electorate 1985 Register	1980-85 Growth Increase in Electorate	1980-85 Growth Percentage increase
Fareham	63,911	70,900	6,989	10·9
South Staffordshire	69,735	77,210	7,475	10·7
The Wrekin	84,936	93,981	9,045	10·6
Aylesbury Vale	91,792	101,509	9,717	10·6
Basildon	107,755	119,098	11,343	10·5
Caradon	50,201	55,469	5,268	10·5
Christchurch	31,540	34,708	3,168	10·0
South Cambridgeshire	76,819	84,502	7,683	10·0
Test Valley	64,528	70,928	6,400	9·9
Rutland	20,883	22,924	2,041	9·8
Uttlesford	43,911	48,155	4,244	9·7
Selby	58,599	64,238	5,639	9·6
Kennet	44,575	48,856	4,281	9·6

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to allow appeals against changes in prescribed drugs consequent upon the introduction of the limited list to be decided by the family practitioner committees.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) on 12 November at column *154*.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received in respect of the change to a limited list for prescribing drugs which relate to *(a)* specific drugs and *(b)* the appeal procedure.

Mr. Hayhoe: Information about representations on an appeal procedure is not readily available. Since the end of June 1985, we have replied to approximately 2,000 representations about specific drugs; information relating to before that date is again not readily available.

Waiting Lists (Manchester)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people in Manchester awaiting urgent operations have been on hospital waiting lists for more than a month;

(2) how many women are on hospital waiting lists in Manchester for gynaecological treatment; and what is now the total number of people on hospital waiting lists in the city.

Mr. Whitney: As at 31 March 1985, the latest date for which information is available centrally, there were, in north, central and south Manchester district health authorities, which cover the city of Manchester, a total of 13,699 cases awaiting admission to all specialties, of which 499 had been awaiting urgent operations for more than a month and 1,280 were awaiting gynaecological treatment.

Child Benefit

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what the saving in public expenditure would be if child benefit was paid at full-rate to people earning up to £100 per week and at half-rate to people earning between £100 and £150 per week and no child benefit when earnings exceed £150 per week.

Mr. Major: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mentally Handicapped Persons (Community Care)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he remains satisfied with the progress of his policy of transferring mentally handicapped persons into the community where possible; what steps he proposes to ensure that suitable premises are available for the purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Generally, yes. The policy is not simply relocation of people, but re-orientation of services and better quality of life. Particular issues that arise are pursued by comments on plans, the annual ministerial accountability reviews of regional health authorities, and so on. It is the responsibility of health authorities, working with local authorities, to plan and provide an appropriate range of residential and other services in the community for mentally handicapped people transferred from hospital to community care. Individuals should be the subject of joint, multi-disciplinary assessment before transfer to ensure that their particular needs are met.

General Practitioners

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the introduction of performance reviews of general practitioners.

Mr. Hayhoe: The suggestions about performance reviews for general medical practitioners put forward by the Royal College of General Practitioners and others are being carefully studied.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek to introduce a recommended retirement date for general practitioners from the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: This matter is under consideration but no decision has been taken.

Artificial Limbs and Appliances

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make it his policy not to change the structure of the artificial limb and appliance services until the McColl report has been made available to the public; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he received the McColl committee report on artificial limbs and appliances; when he intends to make the report public; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if it is his intention to implement immediately the recommendations of the McColl committee on artificial limbs and appliances; if he will be having discussions with relevant organisations about the implications of the report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 13 November at columns *207-208*.

Projects (Thames Regions)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the projects costing £2 million or over for which his Department is responsible, which have been designed, planned, constructed and completed in the Thames regions since 1979.

Mr. Whitney: Following are lists of projects costing £2 million or over recorded centrally as:

(i) started and completed since 1979;

(ii) currently at the planning, design or construction stages.

Schemes started and completed since 1979

North West Thames
- St. Charles Hospital W2
- Charing Cross Hospital North Block
- Lister Maternity Unit (Nucleus)
- St. Mary's Hospital W2 Phase 1A
- Watford (Shrodells Wing) Phase 3

North East Thames
- Clacton District Phase 1
- Colchester DGH Phase 3 Residential
- Newnham Hospital Phase 2
- Broomfield DGH Phase 5
- Colchester DGH Phase 2
- Newnham Hospital Phase 1

South West Thames
- Crawley hospital Stage 3A & 3B
- Croydon/Mayday DGH
- Queen Mary's Hospital Roehampton Phase 1
- St. Georges Blocks G2 & F Phase 2

South East Thames
- Archery House
- Kent & Sussex (Tunbridge Wells) Phase 1
- Maidstone & DGH Phase 1 (Nucleus)
- Orpington DGH Phase 1

Special Health Authority
- Moorfields's Phase I

Schemes costing £2 million plus currently in planning, design, and under construction

PLANNING

North West Thames
- Clayponds Geriatric Unit
- Ealing Maternity Department

North East Thames
- Coppetts Wood

South West Thames
- Bognor Community Hospital
- Royal Surrey County Hospital Phase 2

DESIGN

North West Thames
- Central Middlesex Physchiatric Unit
- St. Albans City Hospital Development Phase 2

North East Thames
- Whittington Hospital Redevelopment Phase 1

South West Thames
- Mid Sussex Hospital Phase 1

South East Thames
- Bassetts Residential Centre MH Services
- Eastbourne New DGH Phase 2
- Hastings DGH Phase 1
- Medway DGH Phase 3B
- Medway DGH Phase 3C

Special Health Authority
- Moorfield's Phase 2
- National Heart and Chest Hospital Phase 1

CONSTRUCTION

North West Thames
- Hemel Hempstead Phase 1
- St. Mary's W2 Phase 1B

North East Thames
- Harold Wood Hospital Phase 1
- Homerton (Eastern) Phase 1

South West Thames
- St. George Block H Phase 2A

South East Thames
- Buckland DGH
- Lewisham DGH Phase 1A
- Lewisham DGH Phase 1B

Special Health Authority
- Hammersmith Hospital Phase 1

Hospital Treatment

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures for the number of acute inpatient cases treated per available bed in London for each year since 1982.

Mr. Whitney: The requested information is given in the table.

NHS hospitals in District Health Authorities and Special Health Authorities partly or wholly within the Greater London area
Average number of acute in-patient cases treated per available bed per year*

Year	
1982	30·5
1983	32·0
1984	33·7

* "Acute" is defined as all specialties except geriatrics, younger disabled, obstetrics and GP maternity, mental handicap and mental illness.

Pharmacies (Contracts)

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to reach agreement with the pharmaceutical services negotiating committee; and from what date the new contract for pharmacies will apply.

Mr. Hayhoe: Agreement on a new NHS contract for community pharmacists was reached between the Government and the pharmaceutical services negotiating committee in June this year. I regret that in the light of legal advice, implementation of this agreement has been deferred until we can obtain the necessary primary powers to control entry to contract. The Government remain fully committed to the agreement but I cannot predict when the necessary powers will be available.

Mental Patients (Secure Accommodation)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will outline the criteria used to determine whether a patient convicted of a criminal offence to which section 37 of the Mental Health Act 1983 applies should be detained in secure medical accommodation or a prison hospital.

Mr. Whitney: Where a person has been convicted of an offence, the court has the choice, in the light of any psychiatric evidence, either to impose a sentence, which may be custodial, or to make a hospital order under section 37 of the Mental Health Act 1983. If the court decided to impose a custodial sentence the person concerned would go to prison and responsibility for dealing with any mental disorder would therefore fall to the prison medical service.

If the person's mental condition were then to deteriorate while he was in prison to a point where he met the requirements of the Mental Health Act for detention for treatment, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary could direct his transfer to hospital under section 47 of the Mental Health Act.

Where the original decision by the court was to make a hospital order under section 37 of the Mental Health Act, the hospital order would not be made until the court had established that a suitable place was available in a hospital and the order would be for his detention in that hospital. Such detention could be in a special hospital if there was judged to be a high level of prospective dangerousness. In other cases, detention would be in a National Health Service regional secure unit or some other suitable hospital.

Foetal Viability

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he has taken to seek to implement the recommendation of the medical profession that the gestational age at which a foetus is considered viable should be changed to 24 weeks.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am pleased to report that the proprietors of the eight nursing homes approved for abortions over 20 weeks' gestation have all agreed voluntarily to cease carrying out abortions at 24 weeks' gestation. This is an important step towards implementing the recommendation in the report of the working party convened by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists on foetal viability and clinical practice. Gynaecologists working in the National Health Service should take account of the report's recommendation in their clinical practice, as the president of the Royal College has sent copies of the report to all fellows and members in this country.

Benefits

Mr. Norris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to lay regulations concerning the treatment for supplementary benefit purposes of income received by students from their parents through covenants.

Mr. Newton: We have today laid before Parliament the Supplementary Benefit (Resources) Amendment (No. 3) Regulations 1985 which, subject to the approval of Parliament, will come into effect on 2 December so as to provide that income paid to a student under a deed of covenant (including the tax repayment) shall be ignored where it represents the assessed parental contribution to the grant or, in the case of a student without a grant, the equivalent of the maximum ordinary maintenance grant appropriate to his course. Any excess payments will be taken into account over 52 weeks, subject to a £4 weekly disregard.

Surgery

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of patients on orthopaedic waiting lists have to wait for over 12 months for the appropriate inpatient surgical treatment in each of the health authorities in England.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 November 1985, c. *90-93*]: I regret that figures for West Midlands and Mersey regional health authorities were erroneously omitted from the reply. They are as follows:

Orthopaedic in-patient waiting lists on 31 March 1985, NHS hospitals, England

Regional and District Health Authority	*Per centage of non-urgent cases on the list for more than one year*
West Midlands RHA—RHA Total	38·4
Bromsgrove & Redditch	18·5
Herefordshire	25·5
Kidderminster & District	6·1
Worcester & District	15·9
Shropshire	20·9
Mid Staffordshire	9·4
North Staffordshire	56·8
South East Staffordshire	22·9
Rugby	0·0
North Warwickshire	6·0
South Warwickshire	51·6
Central Birmingham	30·2
East Birmingham	59·2
North Birmingham	37·3
South Birmingham	34·5
West Birmingham	42·8
Coventry	57·4
Dudley	11·5
Sandwell	*
Solihull	60·8
Walsall	16·8
Wolverhampton	17·7
Mersey RHA—RHA Total	33·4
Chester	20·2
Crewe	4·5
Halton	*
Macclesfield	47·7
Warrington	45·4
Liverpool	31·3
St. Helens & Knowsley	20·9
Southport & Formby	0·0
South Sefton	53·3
Wirral	12·1

*No orthopaedic waiting list.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what specific steps have been taken by his Department to quantify the occurrence and the causes of non-specific pelvic inflammatory diseases in the under-16 age group.

Mr. Hayhoe: [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 November 1985, c. *203*]: Data on the incidence of sexually

transmitted diseases, including non-specific pelvic inflammatory deseases, are collected through annual returns from National Health Service genito-urinary medicine clinics. this information is published in the Department of Health and Social Security statistical bulletin 3/85, a copy of which is in the Library.

Figures on the incidence of non-specific pelvic inflammatory diseases are included in the category of non specific genital infection.

Information on sexually transmitted diseases by age is restricted to primary and secondary syphilis and to post pubertal gonorrhea.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 15 November 1985

PRIME MINISTER

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Ashdown asked the Prime Minister what representations the Government have received from the EC Commission on the United States strategic defence initiative; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: None.

Unemployment (Cost)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Prime Minister what is the latest estimate of the total cost to public funds, including benefits received and tax and insurance payments forgone, of a person being unemployed for a year, broken down into the individual constituents.

The Prime Minister: The estimated average cost per beneficiary of benefits paid in respect of unemployment is £2,350 for 1985-86. Changes in tax revenue and income from national insurance contributions depend on the causes of unemployment and there is a wide range of possible effects. No sensible estimate can therefore be given.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Heysel Football Stadium

Mr. Alton asked the Attorney-General whether action is to be taken to institute proceedings against anyone involved in the riot at the Heysel football stadium.

The Solicitor-General: Any offence of murder or manslaughter committed by a British subject abroad is triable in this country under English law. The English courts would not have jurisdiction to try any other criminal offences arising out of the events at the Heysel stadium on 29 May 1985. It is however open to the Belgian authorities to request the extradition to Belgium of British subjects for offences of murder, manslaughter or other offences of violence committed on their territory. There has, as yet, been no request by the Belgian authorities for the extradition of any British subjects. The Director of Public Prosecutions has considered evidence obtained by the Merseyside police in relation to 34 British subjects who were present at the Heysel stadium. Five of those persons have been informed that they they will not be prosecuted in this country for murder or manslaughter, but it remains open to the Belgian authorities to decide whether to make a request for their extradition. The Director of Public Prosecutions is still considering the position of the other 29 British subjects interviewed by the Merseyside police and is taking the advice of leading counsel.

Magistrates

Mr. Wigley asked the Attorney-General if he will publish a table indicating for each magistrates' bench in Wales the number of magistrates on the bench and the number of those who are regarded as *(a)* having a political affiliation and *(b)* those regarded as having no political affiliation.

The Solicitor-General: Records are not kept of the political affiliations of magistrates, but appended is a table giving the number who have indicated their political views and the number who have not or are uncommitted.

Bench	*Political view*	*No view/ Uncommitted*
South Glamorgan		
Vale of Glamorgan	67	19
Cardiff	162	32
Mid Glamorgan		
Cynon valley	19	14
Lower Rhymney valley	35	8
Merthyr Tydfil	38	3
Miskin	56	45
Newcastle and Ogmore	75	20
Upper Rhymney valley	9	5
Gwynedd		
Bangor	9	8
Caernarfon	20	7
Conwy/Llandudno	17	6
Eifionydd	4	3
Nant Conwy	7	4
Pwllheli	5	9
North Anglesey	15	9
South Anglesey	10	11
Ardudwy-is-Artro	2	5
Ardudwy-Uch-Artro	5	8
Estaminer	5	2
Penllyn	5	7
Talybont	—	7
Gwent		
Abergavenny	17	1
Bedwellty	45	34
Chepstow	14	5
Cwmbran	17	7
Monmouth	8	2
Newport	146	29
Pontypool	14	6
Usk	5	4
Powys		
Newton	12	1
Llanidloes	3	3
Welshpool	15	2
Machynlleth	7	—
Rhayader	6	—
East Radnor	5	5
Llandrindid Wells	4	2
Builth	6	3
Ystradgynlais	8	1
Talgarth	7	—
Crickhowel	6	—
Brecon	11	1
Dyfed—Ceridigion		
Aberaeron	5	1
Aberstwyth	14	3
Cardigan	6	1
Lampeter	4	—
Llandysul	3	2
Tregaron	4	—
Rhydlewis	1	2
Dyfed—Carmarthen—Pembroke		
Amman valley	12	2
Carmarthen	22	2
Cemais	4	2

Bench	Political view	No view/ Uncommitted
Dewsland	5	2
Fishguard	6	1
Haverford West	11	3
Llandeilo	4	3
Llandovery	7	2
Llanelli	24	17
Milford Haven	7	6
Narberth	4	2
Newcastle Emlyn	4	—
Pembroke	12	4
Pencader	5	1
St. Clears	5	—
Tenby	11	2
Whitland	3	1
Clwyd		
Berwyn	13	5
Colwyn	29	2
Dyffryn Clwyd	15	5
Flint	18	5
Hawarden	27	2
Mold	22	8
Rhuddlan	37	5
Wrexham Maelor	78	9
West Glamorgan		
Afan	48	15
Lliw valley	18	19
Neath	42	19
Swansea	134	7

Personal Injury Actions (Northern Ireland)

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Attorney-General what representations the Lord Chancellor has received on the question of abolishing the use of juries in personal injury actions in Northern Ireland; and what action is proposed.

The Solicitor-General: Several such representations have been received by the Lord Chancellor and he has decided to conduct a further review of the desirability of a change in current practice; as a first step the known interested parties will in the near future be asked for their up-to-date views.

WALES

Local Planning Decisions

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many planning decisions by local planning authorities in Wales were reversed on appeal to his Department during his last 12 months period for which figures are available; and how this compares with similar figures for each of the preceding five years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The number of appeals under section 36 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 against decisions of local planning authorities in Wales which were allowed in 1984, the last complete year for which figures are available, was 229 which is 36·3 per cent. of the total number of appeals decided in that year. Comparable figures for the previous five years are:

	Number of S36 appeals allowed	Percentage of total S36 appeals decisions
1983	241	35·9
1982	217	28·5
1981	237	32·5
1980	230	31
1979	164	31

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Parental Rights

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to provide for parents to have the prior right to choose the kind of education to be given to their children enforceable in United Kingdom courts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Section 6 of the Education Act 1980 provides for parents to express preferences for the schools at which they wish their children to be educated and generally requires those preferences to be met, subject to some specific exceptions. There are no present plans to take this further.

Initial Teacher Training

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received concerning the future of initial teacher training centres.

Sir Keith Joseph: This year I have received some 430 representations concerning the future of initial teacher training institutions.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future of initial teacher training *(a)* in England and *(b)* at Portsmouth polytechnic.

Sir Keith Joseph: I am considering advice from the national advisory body for public sector higher education on the allocation of 1986 intakes to courses of initial teacher training in the public sector, including those at Portsmouth polytechnic. At my request the NAB is giving further consideration to the allocation of public sector intakes for 1987-89. The University Grants Committee has allocated intakes to courses of initial teacher training at university departments of education for 1986 and will be considering shortly allocations for 1987-89.

Science Teaching

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied with the standard of science teaching in schools.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend has made clear his view that the standards achieved by school pupils, in science as in other curriculum areas, can and should be improved. "Science 5-16: A statement of policy", published earlier this year by the Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office, sets as objectives that all pupils should be properly introduced to science in the primary school and should continue to study a broad science programme until the age of 16. The Government have pursued these objectives by supporting through education support grant, projects to improve the effectiveness and relevance of science education in

primary schools, and by providing some £2 million annually through the in-service teacher training grants scheme towards training for science co-ordinators in primary schools and heads of science departments in secondary schools.

Microelectronic Support Unit

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the funds which will be forthcoming from local education authorities to ensure the continuance of the microelectronic support unit.

Mr. Chris Patten: The microelectronic support unit is being funded by this Department for a period of five years with a budget for 1986-87 of at least £2·2 million. The local education authorities are not being asked to contribute to these costs. The unit will support local authorities in their promotion of new technology in schools.

ENERGY

Standing Charges

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received relating to the abolition of standing charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave on 15 March 1985 at column *300*. I have continued to receive some representations concerning the abolition of standing charges for gas and electricity to certain groups of consumers.

These charges, which are a matter for the industries concerned, reflect the fixed costs of maintaining a supply. Their abolition would involve the industries in recovering these costs through higher unit charges to consumers generally.

Coal Boiler Conversion Scheme

Mr. Dormand asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much grant-aid has been given to how many projects under the coal boiler conversion scheme for 1984 and for 1985 to the present time.

Mr. David Hunt: In 1984, 76 projects were offered grant aid totalling £14·9 million under the coal firing scheme. In 1985 to the end of October 105 projects have been offered a total of £5·0 million.

Europa House, Stockport

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, when he next meets the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board, he will raise with him the future of Europa house, Stockport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State discussed the matter with the chairman at a recent meeting and understands that it will be some time before any final decision is reached by the board on the future of Europa house.

Gas Prices

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Energy if when he next meets the chairman of the British Gas Corporation, he will raise with him the increases in gas prices proposed for 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: As I told the House on Monday 28 October, gas prices are a matter for the corporation.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Sub-Saharan Africa

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will recommend a financial contribution by Her Majesty's Government to the IFAD special fund for sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Raison: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 12 November at column *146* to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin).

Food Production

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to increase food aid and technical advice and assistance on the growing of food; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: One of the main objectives of the aid programme is to encourage food production in developing countries. We already emphasise aid for agriculture and food production in our bilateral programmes and we aim to increase this where we can. We also provide substantial assistance in this sector through our contributions to multilateral aid institutions and to the international agricultural research centres.

In 1984-85, £114 million was spent on food aid, £91 million of which represented the United Kingdom share of the European Community's programme. The Government believe that greater priority should be given within the EC programme to food aid for famine relief and that other improvements should be made to increase the programme's effectiveness. But food aid is not in most circumstances a cost-effective means of providing development aid, and excessive food aid can damage the interests of local producers. We do not therefore support an overall increase in it.

Aid

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will estimate the amount of private enterprise aid going to the Commonwealth and foreign nations, respectively.

Mr. Raison: Total net private flows to developing countries in 1984 was £1,420 million, of which £105 million was provided as grants by voluntary agencies. Statistics which show net private financial flows to Commonwealth countries separately from those to other developing countries are not available.

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the percentage of Government and private enterprise aid in relation to the United Nations target.

Mr. Raison: In 1984 Britain's performance against the UN one per cent. target combined official and private flows to developing countries was 0·89 per cent. For many years prior to this Britain had exceeded the UN target.

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give a breakdown of the distribution of governmental overseas aid by category including United Nations agencies, European Economic Community contributions, referred emergency contributions, bilateral and others.

Mr. Raison: Gross public expenditure on overseas aid was £1,311 million in 1984. This figure can be broken down as follows:

	1984
UN agencies	65
European Community	226
World Bank Group	197
Other multilateral	43
Total multilateral	531
Bilateral country programmes	
Financial aid	397
Technical co-operation	138
Other bilateral	210
Total bilateral	745
Administrative costs	35
Total gross public expenditure	1,311

Amounts for emergency aid and disaster relief are included in both the multilateral and bilateral figures above.

A more detailed analysis and commentary is contained in "British Overseas Aid 1984", a copy of which is the Library of the House.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

European Year of Gardens

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will propose at the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe and of the European Community that there should be a European Year of Gardens.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has at present no plans to do so.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

United Nations Association

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what public funds are disbursed to the United Nations Association or the United Nations Association Youth Council.

Mr. Eggar: In 1985-86 we gave the United Nations Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland a grant-in-aid of £24,000. The UNA Youth Council received no separate funding from us.

COCOM

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the composition of the new COCOM military committee will be.

Mr. Rifkind: COCOM members have agreed to establish, not a military committee, but a group of security and technology experts. This group will produce technical assessments on the transfer of technology to the Soviet bloc and China. All COCOM members are expected to participate in these arrangements.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current negotiations at COCOM.

Mr. Rifkind: COCOM members are currently reviewing the lists of controlled exports to the Soviet bloc and China. The review began this month and we expect it to be completed in about four years' time.

Czechoslovakia

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many of the queries put to the Czechoslovak authorities in regard to claims lodged under the Foreign Compensation (Czechoslovakia) Order 1982 remain unanswered; how many of the claims have now been settled; when it is expected that the remainder will be settled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Czechoslovak authorities have so far sent 578 replies to the 1,700 queries put to them by the Foreign Compensation Commission. The commission itself has withdrawn 225 of these queries and the balance outstanding is thus close to 900. As at the end of October the commission had made provisional awards totalling £303,441 in 181 cases, provisionally dismissed 146 applications, and summarily dismissed 181 others, while 113 claims have been withdrawn altogether and 9 claims have been abated. The commission is currently examining ways and means of speeding up its remaining work.

Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has requested the United States Government at the forthcoming summit meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev to raise the case of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: In recognition of his exceptional humanitarian work in Hungary Mr. Wallenberg was made an honorary citizen of the USA in 1981. This gives the United States Government a locus to raise his case. Whether or not there is value in doing so at the Geneva summit is a judgment for the United States Government to make. President Reagan has made it clear that he attaches importance to discussing human rights in the Soviet Union with Mr. Gorbachev, but has not specified particular cases he may raise.

Mr. Burt asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further discussions he has had with the Government of the USSR concerning the whereabouts of Raoul Wallenberg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: No further discussions have been held with the Soviet authorities about Mr. Raoul Wallenberg since I raised this sad case with Soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister Kornienko in July in Moscow.

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any evidence regarding the fate of Raoul Wallenberg has been supplied to Her Majesty's Government by the Government of Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: We have not discussed the case of Raoul Wallenberg with the Israeli Government. Conclusive proof of Mr. Wallenberg's fate could be provided only by the Soviet authorities with whom we have raised the case on a number of occasions.

Unpaid Fines (Diplomats)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will publish up-to-date figures held by his Department regarding the number of unpaid parking fines incurred by individual diplomatic missions.

Mr. Eggar: There has been a welcome reduction following the introduction of the new and stricter policy on 1 May. The figures for the most recent quarter, given below, indicate that the annual rate of fixed penalty notices cancelled on grounds of diplomatic immunity is now running at less than half that for 1984. We wish to see a further reduction.

Fixed penalty notices cancelled on grounds of diplomatic immunity for the quarters ending 31 March, 30 June and 30 September 1985 (Metropolitan Police District)

Organisation/Country	*1st Quarter*	*2nd Quarter*	*3rd Quarter*
Afghanistan	3	7	3
Algeria	285	299	254
Antigua & Barbuda	0	0	3
Australia	0	0	0
Austria	18	14	10
Bahamas	5	4	3
Bahrain	166	167	174
Bangladesh	71	70	38
Barbados	58	68	28
Belgium	12	17	20
Bolivia	15	2	0
Botswana	2	2	13
Brazil	1,025	498	30
Brunei	29	51	45
Bulgaria	579	647	389
Burma	91	95	91
Cameroon	268	268	297
Canada	67	45	69
Chile	131	114	86
China	149	263	203
Colombia	92	87	40
Costa Rica	146	155	128
Cuba	473	408	129
Cyprus	532	178	35
Czechoslovakia	60	34	1
Denmark	1	4	1
Dominica, Commonwealth of	4	1	0
Eastern Caribbean States	6	1	5
Ecuador	58	64	46
Egypt	1,357	1,022	747
El Salvador	0	5	4
Ethiopia	88	58	55
Fiji	15	12	8
Finland	102	109	72
France	486	438	254
Gabon	50	72	82
Gambia	69	68	63
German Democratic Republic	130	112	49
Germany, Federal Republic of	31	27	35
Ghana	334	338	276
Greece	288	369	238
Grenada	0	1	0
Guyana	35	26	30
Haiti	0	0	2
Honduras	91	81	72
Hungary	397	290	135
Iceland	42	18	13
India	86	105	100
Indonesia	500	299	155
Iran	183	247	197
Iraq	498	692	439
Ireland, Republic of	221	149	53
Israel	50	64	32
Italy	633	350	213
Ivory Coast	101	157	118
Jamaica	375	164	92
Japan	433	231	87
Jordan	597	537	478
Kenya	269	487	485
Korea	35	16	25
Kuwait	176	136	111
Lebanon	21	7	10
Lesotho	25	33	24
Liberia	24	39	35
Luxembourg	0	0	0
Malawi	30	59	26
Malaysia	769	572	175
Malta, Republic of	58	79	25
Mauritius	27	32	22
Mexico	58	81	74
Mongolia	3	3	2
Morocco	203	232	95
Nepal	28	6	3
Netherlands	5	6	4
New Zealand	0	0	1
Nicaragua	21	17	10
Nigeria, Federal Republic of	1,070	549	495
Norway	21	19	16
Oman	220	175	164
Pakistan	533	307	178
Panama	51	50	53
Papua New Guinea	1	0	1
Paraguay	43	35	21
Peru	148	119	79
Philippines	77	132	146
Poland	519	486	125
Portugal	263	206	82
Qatar	249	216	304
Romania	104	86	59
Saudi Arabia	1,137	912	610
Senegal	69	118	31
Seychelles	3	2	4
Sierra Leone	76	111	125
Singapore	19	3	1
Somali Deomcratic Republic	62	25	7
South Africa, Republic of	2	4	3
Soviet Union	308	335	262
Spain	325	314	107
Sri Lanka	79	117	79
Sudan	479	396	342
Swaziland	2	7	3
Sweden	26	14	8
Switzerland	6	0	3
Syria, Arab Republic of	247	191	124
Tanzania	224	236	159
Thailand	365	288	182
Togo	22	5	14
Tonga	0	0	1
Trinidad & Tobago	36	39	26
Tunisia	99	111	82
Turkey	365	354	201
Uganda	521	319	125
United Arab Emirates	316	319	330
United States of America	47	65	29
Uraguay	84	87	84

Organisation Country	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter
Venezuela	117	148	117
Vietnam	0	3	3
Yemen Arab Republic	24	20	6
People's Democratic Republic of Yemen	62	95	81
Yugoslavia	143	178	89
Zaire	69	66	59
Zambia	135	134	89
Zimbabwe	149	145	163
Apostolic Delegation	0	0	0
Commonwealth Secretariat	36	49	47
Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organisation	0	0	14
Western European Union	1	0	1
International Cocoa Organisation	0	1	0
United Nations	0	1	1
EEC	1	0	1
International Coffee Organisation	2	0	2
International Maritime Satellite Organisation	1	0	1
International Sugar Organisation	2	0	0
Totals	22,250	19,051	12,700

Note. Some of these figures are likely to be reduced by late payments.

EMPLOYMENT

Visual Display Units

Mr. John Golding asked the Paymaster General (1) what steps are being taken to reduce the exposure of workers to visual display units;

(2) what steps are being taken to seek to control the possibility of health risks during pregnancy to women exposed to visual display units; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Visual display units do not normally cause health problems but the environment and manner in which they are used can. Current evidence does not indicate any need to introduce controls on the total time spent by workers operating these units. Recent studies have not identified any excess risks to women operators during pregnancy. The Health and Safety Executive has published guidance in the booklet "Visual Display Units". There are no plans to introduce legislation.

Wages Councils

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will list wages council rates and conditions for all ages and categories of workers currently in force.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Wages councils determine minimum pay rates and other conditions of service for many different categories of workers and for a variety of circumstances. For this reason, it is not practicable to publish in the *Official Report* the statutory minimum rates, which are set out in full in the orders made by the councils. Copies of the wages orders are available in the Library.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the level of unemployment in Knowsley.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 10 October 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the metropolitan borough of Knowsley was 20,222.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Paymaster General how many of those who left school in 1985 in the borough of Knowsley were in full-time employment in the latest available figures.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The available information from the Knowsley careers service is that 181 of this year's fifth-form school-leavers had entered permanent employment by October.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Paymaster General what is the proportion of the work force unemployed *(a)* on Merseyside, *(b)* in Knowsley and *(c)* in Kirkby.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. Rates of unemployment are not calculated for areas smaller than travel-to-work areas. On 10 October 1985 the rate of unemployment in the Merseyside metropolitan county was 21·1 per cent.

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General how many people under the age of 24 years have been unemployed for one, two and three years, respectively, in the city of Portsmouth.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 10 October 1985, in the city of Portsmouth, 716 claimants under 25 years of age had been unemployed for between one and two years, 322 for between two and three years and 257 for over three years. Information is not available for those under the age of 24 years.

Young Persons

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General if he will publish, for each Manpower Services Commission area office, and for *(a)* 16-year-olds *(c)* 18-year-olds the latest careers service estimates of the number and proportion expected to leave school and further education college, and the number and proportion expected to find work outside the youth training scheme by 31 December.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1985, c. *139*]: The information requested is given below. The figures are derived from projections made by the careers service in autumn 1984 and revised in January 1985. The projections represent the careers service's best estimates of the destinations of 16, 17 and 18-year-olds who were eligible to leave school in the academic year 1984-85. There is insufficient information on which to base estimates of leavers from colleges of further education in each area.

Forecast of destinations of 1984-85 school leavers by 31 December 1985*

MSC area office	16 year olds †Leaving school and entering labour market (000s)	Per cent	Employed outside YTS (000s)	Per cent.	17 year olds †Leaving school and entering labour market (000s)	Per cent.	Employed outside YTS (000s)	Per cent.	18 year olds †Leaving school and entering labour market (000s)	Per cent.	Employed outside YTS (000s)	Per cent.
Newcastle	6·9	64	1·5	14	0·7	23	0·3	8	0·3	16	0·2	8
Middlesbrough	6·0	63	1·0	10	0·3	13	0·2	6	0·6	28	0·4	17
Washington	7·2	69	1·0	10	0·7	32	0·2	10	0·5	33	0·1	10
Darlington	6·3	67	1·2	13	0·4	22	0·1	3	0·2	13	‡	2
Greater Manchester (E)	6·8	59	2·1	18	0·9	31	0·4	14	0·3	18	0·2	13
Merseyside Inner	7·7	62	1·2	10	0·8	23	0·2	6	0·9	35	0·5	18
Lancashire	12·2	59	5·1	25	0·6	16	0·3	9	0·9	34	0·6	21
Greater Manchester (N)	9·4	60	2·0	13	0·9	25	0·4	11	0·6	23	0·3	12
Cheshire	8·2	58	2·0	14	0·8	20	0·3	8	0·4	15	0·2	8
Greater Manchester (C)	7·9	59	1·7	12	0·9	25	0·4	11	0·7	26	0·6	20
Cumbria	4·9	66	2·0	27	0·5	25	0·3	14	0·3	21	0·2	13
Merseyside Outer	6·6	59	1·0	9	0·8	29	0·3	12	0·3	18	0·2	10
Sheffield	8·4	66	1·1	8	1·0	30	0·2	7	0·8	37	0·3	14
Wakefield	8·8	66	1·5	11	1·0	37	0·4	15	0·5	31	0·3	16
Hull	9·2	64	2·6	18	1·1	30	0·5	15	0·6	25	0·4	15
Leeds	11·8	57	5·4	26	1·6	26	1·1	18	0·8	19	0·7	18
Bradford	9·8	62	3·2	20	1·6	35	0·7	14	1·4	43	0·6	18
Derby	8·8	63	2·0	14	0·4	14	0·2	6	0·6	28	0·4	18
Wolverhampton	5·5	61	1·4	16	0·6	26	0·2	10	0·4	28	0·2	14
Coventry	6·5	52	1·3	11	0·6	26	0·2	8	0·7	30	0·3	15
Birmingham	11·5	60	2·9	15	1·7	33	1·0	20	0·8	23	0·3	9
Leicester	12·1	55	6·1	28	2·4	35	1·8	26	0·9	22	0·8	19
Nottingham	10·2	64	2·0	13	0·6	18	0·2	6	0·6	21	0·4	15
Staffordshire	10·5	64	1·5	9	0·8	23	0·3	8	0·7	27	0·5	18
Dudley Sandwell	6·8	69	1·3	13	0·3	18	0·1	5	0·5	31	0·1	9
Telford	8·6	55	2·3	15	1·0	27	0·4	10	0·5	19	0·2	9
Lincoln	4·5	55	1·4	17	0·3	14	0·1	7	0·3	24	0·2	19
Taunton	8·7	62	3·5	25	0·7	24	0·4	15	0·6	28	0·5	22
Gloucester	8·5	57	4·1	27	0·9	27	0·6	17	1·4	49	1·2	45
Plymouth	10·8	56	3·4	18	1·2	24	0·5	11	0·9	28	0·6	20
Bristol	7·3	59	2·5	20	1·1	28	0·6	17	0·7	29	0·6	24
Luton	7·4	47	2·3	15	1·6	32	0·8	16	0·8	27	0·6	18
Chatham	11·2	50	4·5	20	2·2	31	1·1	16	1·2	31	0·9	23
Horsham	12·2	43	6·8	24	2·9	24	1·9	16	1·8	25	1·4	20
Fareham	11·1	50	4·4	20	2·3	39	1·3	23	1·6	42	1·3	35
Reading	8·1	47	3·3	19	2·0	32	1·3	20	0·9	24	0·8	22
Chelmsford	12·1	56	5·1	24	2·2	34	1·5	23	1·3	31	1·2	27
Ipswich	10·9	59	3·9	21	1·5	32	0·7	15	0·8	30	0·6	21
High Wycombe	11·5	49	5·8	25	2·2	26	1·3	16	1·4	24	1·1	19
London North	6·7	38	3·4	20	2·6	31	1·5	17	1·0	20	0·7	14
London North East	11·8	57	5·7	28	2·6	38	1·3	19	1·4	44	1·0	31
London South East	11·7	53	4·5	20	2·9	37	1·5	18	1·4	36	0·8	20
London South West	10·0	47	5·3	25	3·2	35	2·1	23	1·8	37	1·3	27
Highlands and Islands	2·4	44	1·2	22	0·5	36	0·4	25	0·2	31	0·2	27
Grampians and Tayside	6·3	39	3·8	24	1·3	33	0·9	25	0·3	25	0·3	20
Lothian and Borders	6·2	42	2·0	14	1·3	38	0·6	17	0·5	35	0·3	21
Glasgow City	7·0	57	2·4	20	1·5	50	0·7	25	0·4	35	0·3	25
Lanarkshire	5·1	45	1·0	9	1·2	43	0·3	12	0·4	43	0·1	15
Ayr, Dumfries and Galloway	4·6	43	1·4	13	0·9	34	0·4	17	0·3	30	0·2	21
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	5·9	39	1·3	8	2·0	49	0·6	16	0·8	56	0·3	23
Central and Fife	5·4	42	1·2	10	1·3	43	0·4	13	0·4	39	0·2	15
Newport	3·8	54	0·8	12	0·7	37	0·4	20	0·2	20	0·2	16
Swansea	5·0	48	0·6	6	0·7	20	0·2	6	0·4	16	0·3	11
Cardiff	7·7	54	1·3	10	1·3	26	0·6	13	0·7	22	0·5	15
Wrexham	6·1	53	1·4	12	0·9	26	0·4	10	0·4	18	0·3	11

* The figures relate only to school leavers from *maintained* schools.
† Excludes those entering further/higher education.
‡ Figures less than 50.
Note: Percentages are based on the totals eligible to leave school.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

English Estates

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is the Government's policy to the proposed management buy-out of English Estates;

(2) what guarantees he will require on the future of Chatham dockyards from English Estates before agreeing to any change in the status of English Estates.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government have received a proposal from the management of English Estates to buy out its assets, but details have not yet been discussed with the board and management of the corporation.

Before agreeing to change the status of English Estates the Government would have to be satisfied that to do so would enhance its ability to continue an effective and responsive factory programme in the assisted areas of England, as well as the re-development of the ex-Royal Navy dockyard at Chatham.

Charity Christmas Cards

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what guidelines his Department lays down for inscriptions on Christmas cards which indicate that the money spent on them will go to charity.

Mr. Howard: None. Such inscriptions if false would best be dealt with under the criminal law.

Nationalised Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy towards the funding of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and of the development of their local bureaux.

Mr. Howard: My Department will continue to fund the National and Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux which provide support services for their members. Development of bureaux is primarily a matter for the relevant local authorities.

Bankruptcies and Liquidations

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many personal bankruptcies and company liquidations, respectively, there were in Great Grimsby between May 1979 and the latest available date.

Mr. Howard: The provisional figures for bankruptcies at Great Grimsby county court in the period 1 April 1979 to 30 September 1985 is 192.

The bankruptcy figures cover all individuals and partnerships: in England and Wales as a whole approximately three quarters of all bankruptcies relate to unincorporated businesses. Receiving orders and administration orders are included: the total is the net number of cases administered after consolidations and rescissions. The number of bankruptcies since 1 October 1984 may have been reduced compared with earlier periods because of increases in monetary limits on bankruptcy proceedings and deposits on petitions. The 1979 figures are only available quarterly.

Figures for company liquidations are not analysed by area.

Departmental Files

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept by his Department on individuals; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

Mr. Butcher: Specific guidelines on security and access to automatically processed data in Government Departments are observed. They are contained in "Protection of Information in Computer Systems" and "Central Government Code of Practice No. 21", issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, which give recommended procedures to safeguard data in computer installations. Copies of these guidelines have been placed in the House Library.

For personnel records held on computers a manual register is kept of those to whom access has been granted and the nature of that access. The computer system automatically maintains an audit log of all accesses which have been made, the purpose of access and the identity of the user.

For manual files a record is kept on the front of each file on each movement between the local or archival registry and the person requesting access. The registry records the names and locations of officials requesting access and the date of access in docket books.

Receiverships

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is the number of firms taken into receivership in Hampshire during each of the last five years;

(2) what is the number of firms taken into receivership in Portsmouth during each of the last five years.

Mr. Howard: The information relating to insolvencies that is available is given in the table below:

	Bankruptcies	
	Portsmouth County Court	*County Courts in Hampshire*
1980	29	59
1981	50	103
1982	58	121
1983	60	123
1984	65	131
1985 to September	*50	*107

* Provisional

The bankruptcy figures cover all individuals and partnerships: in England and Wales as a whole approximately three quarters of all bankruptcies relate to unincorporated businesses. Receiving orders and administration orders are included: the total is the net number of cases administered after consolidations and rescissions. The number of bankruptcies since 1 October 1984 may have been reduced compared with earlier periods because of increases in monetary limits on bankruptcy proceedings and deposits on petitions.

Figures for company liquidations are not analysed by area.

DEFENCE

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, on any occasion, a USAF B-52 strategic bomber aircraft equipped to carry air-launched cruise missiles has made any use of United Kingdom aircraft-basing facilities.

Mr. Stanley: The United States authorities have confirmed that no such deployments to the United Kingdom have been made.

Trident

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have been held with the United States Government over the use of existing or planned United States controlled satellites to communicate with the planned British Trident submarines and missiles.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 25 June at column *386* which applies equally to United States satellites other than Navstar satellites.

United Nations Force (Korea)

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the progress which has been made towards the provision of a memorial to those United Kingdom citizens who lost their lives as members of the United Nations force in Korea.

Mr. Stanley: I understand that a national memorial to those who lost their lives in the Korean war is to be erected in the United Kingdom by the Korean Veterans Association. My Department is currently helping the association in the search for an appropriate site for the memorial.

RAF Aircraft (Civil Operations)

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence if Royal Air Force aircraft have been made available for civilian airline operations since 1 January 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Six Tristar aircraft were purchased from British Airways in February 1983 for use by the Royal Air Force. One of the aircraft was subsequently leased on repayment to British Airways for airline operations on three occasions for a total of 251 aircraft days.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received regarding the working of sections 137 and 142 of the Local Government Act 1972; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend regularly receives a considerable number of representations, both directly and through hon. Members, on a range of matters concerned with these discretionary spending powers. If my hon. Friend has a particular problem in mind, perhaps he will write to me.

Royal Docks

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he has made for a public inquiry into the compulsory purchase orders laid by the London Docklands Development Corporation in respect of land in and surrounding the royal docks.

Sir George Young: A public inquiry into the east Docklands compulsory purchase order is set to open on 14 January 1986. A public inquiry into the eastern gateway access road compulsory purchase order was held on 6 and 7 August 1985.

Home Improvement

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the individuals, local authorities, professional bodies and other organisations which have commented on the proposals in the Government's Green Paper, "Home Improvements—A New Approach", Cmnd. 9513.

Sir George Young: To date, 423 responses to the Green Paper have been received from English local authorities and others, broken down as follows:

	Number
Non-metropolitan district councils	228
Metropolitan district councils and London boroughs	43
Non-metropolitan county councils	13
Metropolitan county councils and GLC	2
Local authority associations	5
Trade associations	12
Professional bodies	20
Voluntary bodies	61
Lending institutions	2
MP's/councillors	9
Private individuals	28

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to bring forward legislative proposals as outlined in "Home Improvements—A New Approach", Cmnd. 9513.

Sir George Young: There are no plans to do so in the current Session of Parliament. Decisions on legislation in future Sessions will be taken in the light of the response to the consultation exercise recently completed.

Control Orders

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many control orders under section 73 of the Housing Act 1964 were made and revoked in England and Wales in each year since 1966.

Sir George Young: This information is not available to the Department. The environmental health report for 1983-84, which is the most recent one published by the Institution of Environmental Health Officers, shows that 11 control orders were made that year by authorities who submitted information to the institution. The report on the first two stages of the Department's research project on HMOs will show the number of control orders in force in 1983-84. I hope to publish this report early in the new year. A control order ceases to have effect five years after it was made, unless revoked in the meantime.

Housing (Capital Allocation)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how the 19845-86 housing capital allocation for the city of Portsmouth compares in real terms with the 1978-79 allocation.

Sir George Young: The housing investment programme allocation for Portsmouth for 1985-86 is £6,402,000. This represents a reduction of 54·5 per cent. in real terms on the allocation for 1978-79. However, since 1981-82 authorities have been able to add to their spending power by drawing on the prescribed proportion of their capital receipts.

Noise Disturbance

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received advocating amendment of the law relating to noise disturbance caused by private parties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department occasionally receives complaints about noisy parties, some of which point to the practical difficulties in bringing disturbance to an end, particularly during the night. I have, however, received no representations that the powers available under part III of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 to take action against noise nuisance need amendment and I believe that the powers are appropriate to the problem.

Housing Starts

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, if he will give the figures for new housing starts in the city of Portsmouth for the last six years.

Sir George Young: The numbers of housing starts reported by Portsmouth during 1979 appear in table 5 of the issue 53 of "Local Housing Statistics", and include dwellings started for the council outside its area, which are also shown separately in table 6. Starts during 1980 to 1983 are in table 1 of issue 73 and during 1984 in table 1 of issue 74. Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many jobs were located in the London Docklands Development Corporation area for each of the last four years.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the London Docklands Development Corporation is spending on refurbishing the John W. McKay.

Sir George Young: The LDDC has agreed to contribute £20,000 towards essential maintenance and servicing costs (not refurbishment) of the John W. McKay. It is also, with the ship's owners (Standard Telephones and Cables) forming a charitable trust to convert the ship into a museum of technological history.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, with reference to housing land transfers of London Docklands Development Corporation-owned land, what are the names of the schemes and the developers and the total numbers of transfers so far undertaken in each scheme.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements have been made by the London Docklands Development Corporation to dispose of West India house and the Ledger building; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: A development brief for the disposal of West India house is currently being prepared by the LDDC as a preliminary to the invitation for tenders.

The corporation is at present negotiating for the disposal of the Ledger building as part of the north quay development.

Local Government (Transfer of Functions)

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if Birmingham city council has supplied him with any estimates of the cost to that council of taking over some of the functions of the West Midlands county council following its abolition; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Birmingham city council has not supplied my Department with any such estimates.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy, in determining the rate support grant settlement for 1986-87, to allocate to Birmingham city council an additional amount equivalent to any extra costs incurred as a result of the transfer to it of certain functions previously the responsibility of the West Midlands metropolitan county council; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: In 1986-87, Birmingham city council's grant-related expenditure (GRE) for block grant purposes will include assessments for the services it inherits from the West Midlands county council. Its grant entitlement will be calculated on the basis of this GRE, and the expenditure it incurs on both its existing and inherited spending.

Local Government (Proposed Legislation)

Mr. Lewis Stevens asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to introduce legislation in the present Session of Parliament on matters relating to the conduct of local authority business.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Government earlier this year appointed the Widdicombe inquiry to consider a number of practices and procedures governing the conduct of local authority business; and to make recommendations for strengthening the democratic process.

Apart from the matters relating to publicity included in the Local Government Bill presently before Parliament, I have reached no conclusions on the issues being examined by the committee of inquiry, nor is there any intention to take legislation action on them in advance of the committee's final report next year.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many environmentally sensitive areas he has plans to recognise under the Agriculture Bill:

(2) if existing grants and incentives which support farming and forestry operations will continue to be available in the environmentally sensitive areas which he plans to recognise under the Agriculture Bill.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Common Agricultural Policy (Expenditure)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the actual European Economic Community spending on agriculture 1983 and 1984; what was the authorised total for 1985; what is the estimated total for 1986; what percentage of each total relates to the destruction, dumping or storage of surpluses of food and wine.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 November 1985]: The information requested is set out in the following table:

	CAP expenditure (mecu)	*Cost of (a) Storage* (b) Withdrawals* as percentage of CAP expenditure*	
1983	16,637	4·8	1·9
1984	19,093	5·2	2·4
1985 budget	20,755	6·2	1·6
1986 draft budget	21,962	6·7	1·5

* These figures represent the cost of:

(a) Storage in public intervention for commodities which have been in structural surplus in this period (cereals including feed grains, sugar, milk products and beef);

(b) Community aid for withdrawals from the market of fish and fresh fruit and vegetables; in some circumstances withdrawn produce finds no end use and has to be destroyed, although the expenditure involved is not specifically identified in the Community statistics which relate to all withdrawals.

There is no Community dumping of food or wine and therefore no expenditure.

Sources:

EC Commission financial reports, report on the implementation of the budget, 1985 budget, 1986 draft budget.

SCOTLAND

Higher Education

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has received the report by the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council on a future strategy for higher education in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: I have received the report by the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council on its review of future strategy for higher education in Scotland, which I asked the council to undertake in June 1984. I am most grateful to the chairman of the council, Mr. Donald McCallum CBE, and his colleagues for the dedication which they have shown to their task. I am arranging for the report to be published as soon as possible, and I shall at that stage invite comments on it. The Government will take account of the report's recommendations and of responses to it in reaching decisions on future higher education policies in Scotland, in the context of the Green Paper on higher education (Cmnd. 9524).

Medical Staffs

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will break down by grade, sex, full and part-time staff the numbers in Scotland of *(a)* radiographers, *(b)* speech therapists, *(c)* clinical psychologists, *(d)* hospital pharmacists, *(e)* medical laboratory scientific officers, *(f)* medical physics technicians and *(g)* physiological measurement technicians.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested for each group of staff in post as at 30 September 1984—the latest available figures — is shown in the table below.

NHS Staff employed in Scotland 30 September 1984

Profession and grade	*Male*	*Female*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Total*
Radiographers:					
Superintendent	25	121	146	—	146
Senior	25	355	300	80	380
Basic	25	515	347	193	540
Totals	75	991	793	273	1,066
Speech therapists:					
Area/District	—	12	12	—	12
Chief	1	39	38	2	40
Senior	4	318	203	119	322
Basic	—	3	2	1	3
Totals	5	372	255	122	377
Clinical psychologists:					
Top	13	2	15	—	15
Principal	27	33	46	10	45
Senior	23	19	40	6	46
Basic	10	25	34	1	35
Totals	73	79	135	17	152

Profession and grade	*Male*	*Female*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Total*
Hospital pharmacists:					
Chief Administrative Pharmaceutical Officer	11	1	12	—	12
Deputy Pharmaceutical Officer	13	6	19	—	19
Principal	25	14	39	—	39
Senior	6	6	12	—	12
Staff	75	127	194	8	202
Basic	25	119	114	30	144
Pre-registration Student	13	50	62	1	63
Totals	168	323	452	39	491
Medical laboratory scientific officers:					
Principal	9	—	9	—	9
Senior Chief	83	4	87	—	87
Chief	222	21	243	—	243
Senior	248	105	346	7	353
Basic	414	576	944	46	990
Junior	194	406	557	43	600
Totals	1,170	1,112	2,186	96	2,282
Medical physics technicians:					
Medical Physics Technician 1	33	2	35	—	35
Medical Physics Technician 2	74	13	85	2	87
Medical Physics Technicians 3	76	33	103	6	109
Medical Physics Technicians 4	44	21	65	—	65
Junior	—	1	1	—	1
Student	12	2	14	—	14
Totals	239	72	303	8	311
Physiological measurement technicians:					
Chief	6	35	41	—	41
Senior	9	105	101	13	114
Basic	12	144	125	31	156
Student	12	58	69	1	70
Totals	39	342	336	45	381

Youth Training

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of youth training scheme leavers in Scotland who left the scheme in each of the months from June 1984 to June 1985 were in *(a)* full-time employment and *(b)* part-time employment three months later.

Mr. Younger: [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 November 1985, c. *67*]: The information is not available in the form requested. The table below shows, however, the results from the Manpower Services Commission's surveys of young people who left the scheme between June 1984 and May 1985. Results of the survey of young people who left the scheme in June 1985 are expected in December and will be placed in the Library.

Surveys of YTS leavers in Scotland *

Destination	*15 per cent. sample survey of June 1984 to March 1985 leavers Per cent.*	*100 per cent survey of April 1985 to May 1985 leavers. Per cent.*
In employment—full time	50	49
—part time	–†	3
Entered full-time education or training	2	1
Joined a different Youth Training Scheme	5	4
Doing 'something else'	3	3
Unemployed	39	38

Note: *Figures relate to destinations of young people some three months after leaving the Scheme and are subject to rounding differences. †Figures for part-time employment are not available for the period concerned. A special manual count of questionnairs from respondents in Scotland who left the Scheme between July and September 1984 suggested that 1 per cent. of leavers entered part-time employment but in the light of the 100 per cent. survey results this figure is liable to have been understated.

THE ARTS

Library Books

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Minister for the Arts what available information he has as to the amount of expenditure per head of population on library books by local authorities in England and Wales in each of the five years 1975 to 1979 and 1979 to 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Central Government do no collect statistics on public libraries, which are the responsibility of local government. Figures for all authorities are collated by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, and are available in the House of Commons Library. My duties in respect to public libraries do not extend to Wales but, with the agreement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, I have included that part of the United Kingdom in this answer.

The details on expenditure on books by public library authorities are not yet available for 1984-85, but those for

the 10 previous years are given in the following table. They are shown in terms of expenditure per 1,000 population, the form in which they are usually given.

Expenditure on books by public library authorities in England and Wales**

Financial year	*Actual expenditure* £	*Expenditure at 1983-84 prices* £
1974-75	419	1,278
1975-76	518	1,257
1976-77	568	1,218
1977-78	645	1,215
1978-79	758	1,293
1979-80	816	1,191
1980-81	871	1,071
1981-82	928	1,037
1982-83	1,054	1,037
1983-84	1,149	1,149

* Figures are in £ per 1,000 population.

CIVIL SERVICE

Departmental Files (Access)

Mr. Cohen asked the Minister for the Civil Service what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept by his Department on individuals; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

Mr. Luce: Specific guidelines on security of automatically processed data in Government Departments are observed. They are contained in "Protection of Information in Computer Systems" and "Central Government Code of Practice No. 21", issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, which give recommended procedures to safeguard data in computer installations. Copies of these guidelines have been placed in the House Library.

Access to manual files is restricted to nominated staff appointed to designated posts in the Cabinet Office (Management and Personnel Office) who have direct responsibility for the personnel management, pay and superannuation of staff.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he is satisfied with the speed and efficacy with which tax offices deal with ordinary income tax cases.

Mr. Moore: No. Arrears of work have accumulated in some tax offices and some taxpayers are having to wait too long for replies from these offices.

To enable the Inland Revenue to handle its growing work load with greater speed and efficacy I have authorised an increase of 3,500 in the 1988 Inland Revenue manpower target. The total Inland Revenue staff will now reduce from 69,274 at April 1986 to 66,374 at April 1988 instead of 62,874 as previously intended.

The Inland Revenue Staff Federation has agreed to lift its long standing ban on the working of overtime. The overtime will make a significant contribution to getting rid of the backlog of work in the short term and the manpower arrangements should help the Inland Revenue to keep up to date with its work in the longer term. But to ensure that the maximum benefit is obtained from these measures the Inland Revenue is launching a major management initiative to help local offices get on top of the work.

This initiative will include some temporary reductions in administrative functions.

It is hoped that taken together, the manpower easement, the removal of the overtime ban, and the management initiative, will produce early and continuing improvement.

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Ryder asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he proposes to take in the light of comments he has received on the consultation note on nationalised industries legislation issued on 20 December 1984.

Mr. MacGregor: My predecessor announced on 9 May that the Government did not intend to propose general nationalised industry legislation in the 1985-86 Session. In view of the progress that is being made on the privatisation programme, and given other legislative priorities, the Government have now decided not to proceed with general legislation in any later Session of this Parliament. Discussions were held with the Nationalised Industries' Chairmen's Group both on the proposals in the consultaion note and on alternative approaches put forward by the group with a view to increasing the corporations' effectiveness and commercial vitality. Useful progress has been made in these discussions which will continue. The progress made will be borne closely in mind if further legislative proposals in respect of any individual corporations are brought forward. The Government intend to continue to strengthen the industries to the point where they can either be transferred to the private sector or, where necessary, remain as successful businesses within the public sector.

Value Added Tax

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *68*, if he will specify the categories covered by the term "Other supplies" in relation to the taxation at the standard rate of human organs or tissue.

Mr. Gow: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

European Monetary System

Mr. Soames asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the United Kingdom will be joining the European monetary system.

Mr. Lawson [*pursuant to the reply*, 14 November 1985]: The United Kingdom is a founder member of the European monetary system. The question of participation in the exchange rate mechanism is kept under continuous review.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Soames asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to seek to reduce fluctuations of the exchange rate.

Mr. Lawson [*pursuant to the reply*, 14 November 1985]: I took part in the meeting of the Group of Five Finance Ministers and Central Bank governors in New York on 22 September, when we agreed that exchange rates should better reflect fundamental economic conditions than had been the case, that some further orderly appreciation of the main non-dollar currencies against the dollar was desirable and that we should stand ready to co-operate more closely in concerted intervention to encourage this when to do so would be helpful. The United Kingdom has played a full part in implementing this agreement.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Metropolitan Police (Expenditure)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) why he did not give a substantive reply to the question from the hon. member for Leyton regarding certain Metropolitan police expenditure to which an interim reply was given on 9 July, *Official Report*, column 385; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was, for each year since 1979, the amount spent by the Metropolitan police on *(a)* police control and command suites, *(b)* the fittings of senior officers' accommodation and *(c)* chauffeur-driven cars.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I very much regret the delay in replying to the hon. Member's earlier question. Records are not kept by the Metropolitan police in a form which enables the information requested (in so far as it is available) to be readily identified and it was necessary to carry out a special exercise to compile it. The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that the available information is as follows:

Command and control suites

Table A below gives detail of the amounts spent in each financial year since 1979-80 on the building and furnishing of Metropolitan police command and control suites at New Scotland Yard and in divisions. The computerised command and control system will be vital to the effective functioning of the force since, when fully operational, it will handle all incoming messages and all operational instructions to patrolling officers and will be in continual use 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It was therefore necessary to provide a working environment which would assist the operators to maintain maximum alertness; and this is reflected in the design and standard of finish of the equipment and furniture in the suites, which was decided upon only after considerable research. Work on the 75 divisional suites is not yet completed: the costs shown relate to the central complex at New Scotland Yard, 22 completed divisional suites and 6 partially completed suites.

Furnishing costs of senior officers' accommodation

Separate records are not kept by the Metropolitan police of the annual furnishing costs incurred in fitting out the accommodation of senior officers (ie officers of the rank of commander and above, and their civil staff equivalents). Table B below set out for each rank and grade of senior officer an estimate, based on the currently approved scale of issue of furnishings, which illustrates the typical cost of fitting out new accommodation for such an officer. Costs of this order are seldom incurred in practice because an officer will generally take over the existing accommodation and furnishing used by his or her predecessor. The furnishings of most senior officers' rooms have not changed for a number of years; and some are furnished with items acquired by the force many years ago, the cost of which is no longer known.

Chauffeur-driven cars

Table C below shows the total estimated cost to the Metropolitan police of chauffeur-driven cars and their drivers in each year since 1979. These cars are not for the exclusive use of those to whom they are primarily assigned but are available for use by other staff. The figures shown in the table relate to total use of the vehicles and drivers and it is not possible to distinguish between the costs applicable to different uses. A special review of the use of staff cars is in progress.

Table A

£000

Expenditure on Metropolitan Police Command and Control Suites, 1979-80—1984-85

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*
Central command complex			
Consoles, clocks and furniture	70	30	60
Associated building work	120	1,410	1,315
Divisional complexes			
Consoles, clocks and furniture	—	—	—
Associated building work	—	—	101
	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Central command complex			
Consoles, clocks and furniture	320	172	23
Associated building work	165	71	—
Divisional complexes			
Consoles, clocks and furniture	10	7	279
Associated building work	112	701	712

Table B

Estimate of typical cost of furnishing new accommodation for senior Metropolitan police officers

Prices at August 1985, excluding VAT

	£
Police	
Commissioner	10,055
Deputy commissioner	7,606
Assistant commissioner	5,868
Deputy assistant commissioner	3,125
Commander	1,209
Civil Staff	
Receiver	7,606
Deputy receiver	5,868
Grade 5	3,125
Grade 6	1,916
Principal (and equivalents)	1,209

Table C

Estimated expenditure on Metropolitan police chauffeur-driven cars and drivers 1979-80—1984-85

	£ million
1979-80	1·363
1980-81	1·714
1981-82	1·812
1982-83	2·080
1983-84	2·302
1984-85	2·386

Immigration and Nationality Department

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are employed in the travel document section of the immigration and nationality department.

Mr. Waddington: Fifteen as at 11 November 1985.

Travel Documents

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for travel documents have been refused during each of the last 10 years; and on what grounds.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that this information is not available.

Deportation

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many stateless persons have been deported in each of the last 10 years; and on what grounds.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is given in the following table. A stateless person is normally deported to the country which issued his travel document.

Stateless persons deported by reason 1975-1984

Number of deportations

Year of deportation	*Reason for deportation (section of the Immigration Act 1971)*				
	Failure to observe leave to enter or remain (s. 3(5)(a))	*Conducive to the public good (s. 3(5)(b))*	*Member of the family of a person being deported (s. 3(5)(c))*	*Court recommendation (s. 3(6))*	*All reasons*
1975	—	1	—	—	1
1976	—	1	—	3	4
1977	2	1	—	3	6
1978	2	2	—	6	10
1979	—	—	—	—	—
1980	1	—	—	1	2
1981	—	1	—	1	2
1982	—	—	—	—	—
1983	2	—	—	1	3
1984	—	—	—	2	2

Refugees

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will amend paragraph 133 of the immigration rules to include refugees within the categories mentioned; and whether he has received any representations in this regard.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. Friend has received no recent representations regarding amendment of paragraph 133 of the immigration rules to include refugees, but we have undertaken to consider such an amendment when a suitable opportunity to amend the rules arises.

Crown Courts (Summary Offences)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will introduce a change in the law to enable the Crown court to have powers to try a defendant for a summary offence where that defendant is charged with both summary and indictable offences.

Mr. Mellor: Some proposals which are relevant to this matter will be discussed in a consultative document which we propose to issue shortly concerning the distribution of court business.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many baths, showers and toilets are available to prisoners in Wandsworth prison; how many bath or showers each prisoner is allowed per week; and how many changes of clothes each prisoner is allowed per week.

Mr. Mellor: Wandsworth currently has available to inmates a total of 20 baths, 60 showers, 205 WCs and 163 urinals. Each prisoner is normally allowed one bath or shower per week and one change of clothes consisting of 2 shirts, 2 pairs of socks, 2 pairs of underpants, 2 vests and 1 T-shirt. In addition 2 towels, 1 sheet and 1 pillow case are changed weekly. Overclothing is changed as necessary. Some problems have arisen recently in relation to these arrangements but have now been resolved.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how many hours in the week ended 2 November, or any other recent typical week, the workshops in Wandsworth prison were open; what was the average number of prisoners employed; how many classes took place and for how many hours; what was the average number of inmates in each class; how many individual prisoners attended at least one class during the week; and how much time, on average, each prisoner spent out of his cell during that week.

Mr. Mellor: In the week ended 2 November two workshops were closed at Wandsworth prison and the remaining eight workshops were open for an average of 17 hours employing an average of 24 prisoners each. In addition 290 prisoners were employed on various domestic and maintenance duties. Ninety nine classes were held during the week with total class hours of 185.5, the average number of prisoners attending each class was

between eight and nine and about 340 prisoners attended at least one class during the week. It is not practicable to calculate the average amount of time spent out of cells since this covers many things apart from work and education, including for example, exercise, association, visits, medical treatment and applications to see the governor.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the maximum number of prisoners who can be employed in workshops in Wandsworth prison on any one day.

Mr. Mellor: Seven hundred and thirty-five.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many square feet of exercise space are available to prisoners in Wandsworth prison.

Mr. Mellor: Sixty-six thousand three hundred sq ft in exercise yards and 1,820 sq ft in the gymnasium.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when all the work listed to take place in the kitchen of Wandsworth prison is due to be finished; what has been the total cost of this work; and what has been the time delay in the completion of this work.

Mr. Mellor: The kitchen was completed on 1 November. During the course of the rebuilding it became evident that additional work was required which, together with disruption arising from maintaining existing cooking facilities, caused the contractual period to overrun by 53 weeks. The estimated cost of the project is £1,331,550. This figure does not however include any additional sums that may be payable in respect of outstanding claims from the contractor for disruption of the work which have still to be settled.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present approved list of works due to be started during the next 12 months at Wandsworth prison; and what is the cost of each item of work.

Mr. Mellor: In addition to certain minor repairs, the programme is as follows:

	£ thousand
General security measures	953
New staff mess	495
Cell call and lighting upgrading	50
Maintenance items arising from survey report	50
Maintenance of prison officers' quarters	100
Convert boilers to dual fuel system	165

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the items of work approved for Wandsworth prison on which work is not taking place because funding has not been agreed.

Mr. Mellor: Funds are not yet available for the following items of work which have been approved in principle:

Alterations to search room
Mesh to cell windows
Vegetable chill room

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the new staff mess planned for Wandsworth prison; with whom the plans have been discussed; what is the cost of this work; and when it is due to start.

Mr. Mellor: The existing staff mess at Wandsworth is inappropriately located in cellular accommodation within the secure perimeter. The provision of a new mess on land adjacent to the prison will provide better facilities for staff and will enable twenty cells to be returned to inmate occupation. The governor and, through him, local staff, together with relevant headquarters divisions have been consulted, and planning clearance obtained from the local planning authority. The work is due to start early next year at an estimated cost of £495,000.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the items covered in the refurbishing of the prison officers' mess at Wandsworth prison and the total cost of this work.

Mr. Mellor: There are no plans to refurbish the existing prison officers' mess at Wandsworth, since a new staff mess is to be provided.

Cable Television (Northern Ireland)

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the licensing of cable television systems in Northern Ireland and his plans to award franchises in the Province to cable broadcasting companies.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Decisions on these matters are for the Cable Authority, which I understand has no plans to advertise further franchises in Northern Ireland in the immediate future.

Wormwood Scrubs Prison

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how many hours in the week ended 2 November, or any other recent typical week, the workshops in Wormwood Scrubs prison were open; what was the average number of prisoners employed; how many classes took place and for how many hours; what was the average number of inmates in each class; how many individual prisoners attended at least one class during the week; and how much time, on average, each prisoner spent out of his cell during the week.

Mr. Mellor: In the week ended 2 November, the eight workshops at Wormwood Scrubs prison were open for an average of 16·5 hours employing an average of 26 prisoners each. In addition 235 prisoners were employed on various domestic and maintenance duties. Ninety seven classes were held during the week with total class hours of 191, the average number of prisoners attending each class was seven and about 220 prisoners attended at least one class during the week. It is not practicable to calculate the average amount of time spent out of cells since this covers many things apart from work and education, including for example, exercise, association, visits, medical treatment and applications to see the governor.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the maximum number of prisoners who can be employed in workshops in Wormwood Scrubs prison on any one day.

Mr. Mellor: Five hundred and twenty-five.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many baths, showers, and toilets are available to prisoners in Wormwood Scrubs prison; how

many baths or showers each prisoner is allowed per week; and how many changes of clothes each prisoner is allowed per week.

Mr. Mellor: Wormwood Scrubs currently has available to inmates a total of 14 baths, 119 showers, 142 WCs and 137 urinals. Each prisoner is normally allowed one bath or shower per week.

Convicted prisoners are normally allowed one change of clothes per week consisting of 2 shirts, 2 pairs of socks, 2 pairs of underpants, 2 vests and 1 T-shirt. In addition 2 towels, 1 sheet and 1 pillow case are changed weekly. Overclothing is changed as necessary. Unconvicted prisoners may wear their own clothing and have changes brought in. If they wear prison clothing, it is changed on the same basis as for convicted prisoners.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many square feet of exercise space are available to prisoners in Wormwood Scrubs Prison.

Mr. Mellor: Forty eight thousand eight hundred and seventy sq ft in exercise yards and 6,780 sq ft in the sports hall are currently available. While the establishment is redeveloped over the next few years the amount of exercise space available will vary, but one of the initial aims of the redevelopment is to increase the open space available within the perimeter.

Boards of Visitors

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will recommend that boards of visitors should prepare annual reports of their work and make them generally available.

Mr. Mellor: Rule 97 of the prison rules 1964 (and corresponding youth custody and detention centre Rules) requires every board of visitors to make an annual report to the Secretary of State at the end of each year. There are no plans to make these reports generally available but boards who wish to publish an annual account of their work are encouraged to do so.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which boards of visitors publish annual reports.

Mr. Mellor: There is no formal provision for publication of the annual reports which boards make to the Secretary of State.

Open Prisons

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why it is necessary to censor letters to and from prisoners in open prisons.

Mr. Mellor: Most correspondence between prisoners at open establishments and their families and friends is not read by staff. This policy, which was introduced in 1976, reflects the security assessment of prisoners who are selected for open conditions. However, a random 5 per cent. of such correspondence—and all correspondence of other types, except correspondence with legal advisers in certain circumstances—is still subject to reading, as a check on compliance with the restrictions on the contents of correspondence, which apply to all prisoners. The arrangements for censorship at open prisons are under review in the light of the recommendations by the control review committee.

Prison Governors

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to grant greater powers to prison governors to deal with applications that are at present sent to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No major changes are at present contemplated in governors' discretion to deal with applications.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of men in each of the London prisons who were not working in prison workshops or doing other prison work on 1 October.

Mr. Mellor: The number of prisoners not working in prison workshops or doing other prison work on 1 October 1985 was: Brixton 870, Pentonville 365, Wandsworth 1,015 and Wormwood Scrubs 692.

Frankland Prison

Mr. Mark Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action the prison department will be taking to implement recommendation 43 of the Chief Inspector of Prisons in his report on Her Majesty's prison, Frankland, that the confession room in the chapel should be soundproofed.

Mr. Mellor: The small amount of work required will be undertaken at a convenient date and when funds are available.

Telephone Tapping (Sheffield)

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now answer questions on the number of telephones which were tapped in Sheffield between 8 July and 9 August.

Mr. Hurd: No. Exceptionally, certain statistics were given in annex 2 of the White Paper "The Interception of Communications in the United Kingdom" (Cmnd. 9438, February 1985), but it would be contrary to the long-standing policy of successive governments to add to the information provided in the White Paper.

Data Protection Act

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what costs will necessarily be incurred by a data subject wishing to follow up each individual potentially relevant entry in the data protection register arising from levels of charges permitted under the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Waddington: A data user will be entitled, if he wishes, to charge a fee to a data subject who requests access to information held by the user. The maximum fee will be fixed by an order made by my right hon. Friend but the figure has not yet been decided upon.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what inquiries he made of representatives of (i) the general public and (ii) those experienced in following up references obtained from very large data bases, before designing the registration provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Waddington: Views were sought from a large number of organisations representing data users and subjects before and during the passage of the Bill. Since his appointment, the data protection registrar has conducted wide-ranging consultations on the development of the registration process.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps the registrar has taken to publicise the matters relevant to home computer owners and their possible liabilities under the Data Protection Act 1984 arising from the borderline between exempt personal affairs and registerable business activities.

Mr. Waddington: The data protection registrar informs us that he has directed his publicity towards data users who may have to register whilst taking the opportunity on all occasions to point out the exemption for an individual who holds personal data concerned only with the management of his personal, family or household affairs or for recreational purposes.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to publicise requirements under the Data Protection Act 1984 to anticipate at the time of registration activities which would be lawful if registered but unlawful if not so registered.

Mr. Waddington: Publicity for the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1984 is primarily a matter for the data protection registrar. As part of his wide-ranging publicity campaign he has issued over 400,000 copies of a guideline booklet which gives detailed advice on the Act and he has recently published a set of answers to questions which are commonly asked.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are now estimated to be required to handle entries in the data protection register; and how this compares with estimates given to the House when the Bill was before it.

Mr. Waddington: The explanatory and financial memorandum to the Data Protection Bill indicated that the data protection registrar would initially need about 20 staff. It was made clear during the passage of the Bill, however, that my right hon. Friend would consider sympathetically any requests for more staff and, as a result of discussions with the registrar, a staffing complement of 47 has been approved.

The registrar is reviewing his staffing requirements as more experience is gained and the figures will be reviewed with him from time to time.

It is, of course, the intention that the cost of the registrar's functions will eventually be covered by income from fees.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the time of the staff of the data protection registrar will be available for supervisory duties over registered organisations.

Mr. Waddington: The data protection registrar informs us that he is now turning his attention more to the supervisory aspects of the legislation. His first estimates are that 25 per cent. of his resources will be available for supervisory duties by the time the Act comes fully into force in November 1987.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what estimate he has made of the number and proportion of registrations which will be needed for telephone systems used for business purposes which incorporate memories for frequently used numbers;

(2) what estimate he has made of the number of entries in the register of data protection which will be relevant to any data subject wishing to know where details of his financial affairs are held.

Mr. Waddington: None; but the hon. Member may care to approach the data protection registrar who is responsible for the registration procedures under the Data Protection Act 1984.

Marina Theodorou

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when a decision is likely to be made in the case of Miss Marina Theodorou of Roman Park, Lichfield, Staffordshire, who made an application for a work permit on 9 September 1985.

Mr. Waddington: Miss Theodorou's application was referred by the Home Office to the Department of Employment on 16 October for consideration as to whether it met the requirements of the work permit scheme. I understand that the Department of Employment will need to make further inquiries before it can reach a decision on the application and that it will accordingly shortly be in contact with Miss Theodorou's prospective employer.

TRANSPORT

A11 (Barton Mills)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the overall length and width of the gap in the central island between the two carriageways of the A11 bypass now under construction south-west of Barton Mills roundabout; and by what numbers of feet this exceeds that of the maximum permitted length of heavy goods vehicles including those with trailers.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend probably refers to the Tuddenham road junction, about which we have corresponded. The width of the central reserve is 10 metres. The junction has been for the predicted traffic demand, including a small number of HGVs. HGVs with trailers have a normal statutory maximum length of 18 metres. Articulated HGVs are normally limited to 15·5 metres and rigid lorries to 11 metres. Tuddenham road itself is unsuitable for such vehicles. There is an appropriate signed alternative route for through traffic involving the A1101 from Bury St. Edmunds, which joins the A11 at the nearby Five Ways roundabout. The Department will be discussing with the Suffolk county council the possibility of measures to restrain the use of Tuddenham road by non-local heavy goods traffic.

EuroBridge (Exhibition)

Sir Antony Buck asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to EuroBridge to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am happy that exhibitions of all the Channel fixed link proposals be held in the Upper Waiting Hall.

A6(M) (Footbridge)

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to build a footbridge over the proposed A6(M) Stockport north-south bypass to link Hazel Grove footpath No. 64 with Stockport footpath No. 119.

Mrs. Chalker: The draft orders for the A6(M) do not provide for a footbridge at this point, because the alternative routes being provided are reasonably convenient and the cost of an extra crossing would not be justified. Objectors to these proposals will be able to present their case to an independent inspector at a public inquiry. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Transport and for the Environment will take a final decision after consideration of the inspector's report.

M40 Motorway

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the additional cost of completing the M40 due to delays arising from litigation in connection with the proposed line of the route.

Mrs. Chalker: Although the delays arising from the litigation will lead to additional costs, the full costs are subject to other variables and will not be known until after the road is built. It is clear that there will be increased costs both in terms of actual expenditure and in terms of lost benefits to both potential users of the new road and those communities who have to wait longer for the relief that the M40 will bring.

M1-M40 (Traffic)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport what, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth dated 11 November, is the percentage of traffic on the M1 represented by the 16,000 to 20,000 vehicles referred to as being likely to transfer from the M1 to the M40.

Mrs. Chalker: The 16,000 to 20,000 vehicles per day quoted in my reply to my hon. Friend on 11 November as expected to transfer from the M1 to the M40 represents up to around 20 per cent. of the traffic expected to be using the M1 prior to the opening of the M40.

Driving Tests

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is the length of the average waiting time for a driving test in Hampshire at present; and how many people were on that list as of 1 November;

(2) what is the length of the average waiting time for a driving test in Portsmouth at present; and how many people were on that list on 1 November 1985.

Mrs. Chalker: Records are kept by individual driving test centres, not specifically by county. The average waiting times, which are far too long, and the number of applicants waiting to take a test at each driving test centre in Hampshire were (at 12 November 1985, when the records were consulted) as follows:

	Average waiting period (weeks)	*Number of applicants outstanding*
Aldershot	18	2,017
Basingstoke	16	1,890
Farnborough	27	3,632
Southampton (Forest Hills Drive)	13	2,043
Southampton (Maybush)	19	3,331
Gosport	16	2,469
Portsmouth	21	4,526
Winchester	16	1,275

Recruitment and training is already reducing unacceptably long waiting periods. We are continuing to recruit as rapidly as we can by accelerating procedures where possible and intensifying the training of new entrants.

Accident Statistics

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents there have been in the last six years involving serious injury or death where coaches were involved.

Mrs. Chalker: Information on road accidents in Great Britain involving injury is reported by the police to the Department on form STATS19; buses and coaches are not identified separately.

The number of accidents involving coaches or buses and which resulted in death or serious injury in the last five years was:

Accidents involving buses or coaches, 1980-1985

	Fatal	*Fatal and serious*
1980	253	2,579
1981	219	2,372
1982	248	2,303
1983	234	2,248
1984	224	2,149

Data for further years could only be given at disproportionate cost.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what ministerial visits have taken place or are planned in the areas directly affected by the construction of the proposed east London river crossing.

Mrs. Chalker: My last official visit was in August 1982.

Coach Safety

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps have been taken in his Department to improve coach safety.

Mrs. Chalker: As I explained earlier today, we have been discussing a number of new safety measures with the bus and coach industry, including roof strength, seat belts and the use of fire retardant materials. We are consulting the industry so that high speed coaches can in future be fitted with speed governors.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library the full proposals submitted to him by Expressway, the Channel Tunnel Group, EuroBridge and EuroRoute.

Mr. Ridley: No. The promoters' proposals contain a large amount of commercially confidential financial and technical material. Promoters are free to make publicly available such contents of their proposals as they wish, subject to consideratons of national security, but the decision is for them.

Titford Viaduct

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on repairs to the Titford viaduct of the midland link motorways, outlining the cost of repairs, delays in completion, added costs in respect of work not in the contract and details of the supply of vehicles for inspecting engineers.

Mrs. Chalker: A contract for the repair of a length of the M5 immediately south of Titford viaduct is currently in progress. In the course of that work a subcontractor misjudged the boundary of the contract site and cut through the road surface and into the reinforced concrete deck of the viaduct to a depth of about 3 in. This damage has since been repaired, under a separate contract, at an estimated cost of £40,000; the Department is seeking reimbursement.

Other additional costs have been incurred by the contractor carrying out the major maintenance contract but these are his responsibility. Completion of the contract has been delayed by about three weeks, part of that delay is attributable to the damage discussed above. Under the terms of the contract the contractor supplied 12 vehicles for the use of the site staff employed by West Midlands county council who are our agents for this work.

Okehampton Bypass

Mr. Rost asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has made any estimate of the cost of construction using the cut and cover technique of that part of the proposed Okehampton bypass which it is intended should traverse Dartmoor national park.

Mrs. Chalker: The proposed southern bypass of Okehampton does not traverse the national park; it runs along the northern edge mostly within about 50 yards of that boundary. A cut and cover tunnel would not be a practicable proposition as it would demand unacceptably deep cuttings into the escarpment and the road's proximity to the railway line at Fatherford would make a cut and cover tunnel impossible there without moving the line of the road.

A driven tunnel could be engineered, but either would be extremely expensive. On a conservative estimate a tunnel would cost about £80 million a mile or around £380 million for the 4¾-mile length along the national park. This compares with £22 million for the entire 5¼-mile bypass now planned which, of course, will be almost as well hidden from view as any tunnel.

A1(M) (Hatfield)

Mr. Rost asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the length of the A1(M) motorway which it is proposed to cut and cover at Hatfield; and what is the estimated additional cost.

Mrs. Chalker: The A1(M) Roestock to Stanborough scheme at Hatfield is in total 4 miles long, and the cut-and-cover tunnel section approximately three quarters of a mile. A scheme with a section in open cutting along the tunnel length would at spring 1984 prices have cost an estimated £14·5 million less.

Road Traffic Offences

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many successful prosecutions there have been in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years for the offence of using an untaxed motor cycle on public roads;

(2) how many successful prosecutions there have been in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years for the offence of riding a motor cycle without the statutory headgear.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply.

Information is not collected on the vehicle type in respect of findings of guilt for faling to pay the appropriate duty for motor vehicle licences. The available information, which relates to England and Wales, is of findings of guilt for all vehicle types. These figures and those relating to offences of driving or riding on a motor cycle without protective headgear are published annually in "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (table 5 of the issues for 1983 and 1984, and in corresponding tables of earlier volumes). The issue for 1984 will be placed in the Library next week.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Departmental Offices (Staff)

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what has been the reduction in personnel in the Davenport house, Salford, office of his Department over the last three years; and what savings have resulted from the reduction in staff;

(2) what has been the reduction in personnel in the Farnworth office of his Department over the last three years; and what savings have resulted from the reduction in staff;

(3) what has been the reduction in personnel in the Baskerville house, Salford, office of his Department over the last three years; and what savings have resulted from the reduction in staff;

(4) what has been the reduction in personnel in the Windermere road, Leigh, office of his Department over the last three years; and what savings have resulted from the reduction in staff.

Mr. Major: Information is available only for the last two years. The following table sets out the staff in post in the four offices concerned.

Office	Staff in post 1 April 1983	Staff in post 1 April 1985	Saving (£)
Salford (Davenport House)	177	177	—
Farnworth	122	125	—
Salford (Baskerville House)	148	141	51,576
Leigh	148	142	44,208

Savings are based on 1984-85 average salary costs.

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what has been the annual cost of the overtime worked in each of the last five years, and to date in 1985, in constant terms in the Davenport house, Salford, office of his Department;

(2) what was the number of hours of overtime worked in the Davenport house, Salford, office of his Department in each of the last five years and to date in 1985;

(3) what was the number of hours of overtime worked in the Farnworth office of his Department in each of the last five years and to date in 1985;

(4) what was the number of hours of overtime worked in the Windermere road, Leigh, office of his Deprtment in each of the last five years and to date in 1985;

(5) what was the number of hours of overtime worked in the Baskerville house, Salford, office of his Department in each of the last five years and to date in 1985;

(6) what has been the annual cost of the overtime worked in each of the last five years, and to date in 1985, in constant terms, in the Farnworth office of his Department;

(7) what has been the annual cost of the overtime worked in each of the last five years and to date in 1985 in constant terms in the Windermere road, Leigh, office of his Department;

(8) what has been the annual cost of the overtime worked in each of the last five years and to date in 1985, in constant terms, in the Baskerville house, Salford, office of his Department.

Mr. Major: The following table sets out the hours worked, and the cost of such work based on 1984-85 average costs to the Department, in the four offices concerned. The latest date for which accounts are held is 22 October 1985.

The increase in hours worked during 1984-85 was mainly to clear outstanding work resulting from industrial action at the Department's Newcastle computer centre.

Year	Salford (Davenport House) Hours	Salford (Davenport House) Cost (£)*	Salford (Baskerville House) Hours	Salford (Baskerville House) Cost (£)*	Leigh Hours	Leigh Cost (£)*	Farnworth Hours	Farnworth Cost (£)*
1981-82	4,569½	31,941	5,309½	37,113	9,379½	65,563	3,311½	23,147
1982-83	2,312½	16,164	3,700	25,863	10,175	71,123	42,143	294,576
1983-84	3,589	25,087	4,680½	32,717	6,105	42,674	2,497½	17,458
1984-85	22,644	158,282	26,362½	184,274	18,759	131,125	19,221½	134,358
1985 to 22 October 1985	27,805½	194,360	5,716½	39,959	26,418	184,662	14,208	99,314

* These figures are based on 1984-85 average costs of overtime in the Department.

NHS

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the cost of administration, expressed at current prices, of the National Health Service in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1983 and at the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is not possible to give a complete answer as there is no precise definition of "administration". The annual accounts of health authorities show revenue expenditure on headquarters adminstration, revalued to 1984-85 prices, as:

	£ million
1974-75	412
1979-80	468
1983-84	435
1984-85	*445

* Provisional figure.

These figures exclude general administative expenditure at operational levels. They include the expenditure of the Dental Estimates Board and the Prescription Pricing Authority. For 1983-84 and 1984-85, they also include the expenditure of certain other special health authorities established at various dates since 1980 to provide National Health Service central services. (1983-84 £0·4 million and 1984-85 £3·0 million).

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost at current prices of employing personnel under each category of staff in the National Health Service in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1983 and at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information is shown in the table:

Salaries & Wages Expenditure — *£ million (at 1984-85 prices)*

	1974-75*	1979-80	1983-84	1984-85†
(1) Regional and District Health Authorities and the Special Health Authorities for the London Postgraduate Teaching Hospitals				
Revenue Expenditure				
Medical	639	731	862	884
Dental	34	40	46	47
Nurses & midwives	2,380	2,519	2,957	3,034
Professional & technical	427	524	612	647
Opticians	4	2	1	1
Pharmacists	29	35	36	37
Administrative & clerical	640	712	742	746
Ancillary staff	1,356	1,099	1,015	836
Maintenance staff		188	182	175
Ambulance staff	148	168	176	179
Non-NHS staff (agency staff etc)	81	84	62	79
Chairman's remuneration	—	—	2	2
Total	5,738	6,102	6,703	6,778
Capital Expenditure				

	1974-75*	1979-80	1983-84	1984-85†
Salaries and wages, etc of staff of professional and technical departments charged to capital account	35	30	33	32
Total (Revenue and Capital)	5,773	6,132	6,736	6,810
(2) Dental Estimates Board and Special Health Authorities providing National Health Service Central Services				
Staff of the Dental Estimates Board and Prescription Pricing Authority (mainly administrative & clerical)	21	22	22	23
Staff of other special health authorities (various)	—	—	2	5
Total	21	22	24	28
(3) Total	5,794	6,154	6,760	6,838

* Figures partly estimated because of incomplete returns by authorities.

† Provisional figures.

NOTE

The figures are derived from the annual accounts of health authorities in England. They exclude payments to doctors, pharmacists, dentists, opticians and others providing family practitioner services. A detailed breakdown of staff employed by the Dental Estimates Board and special health authorities providing NHS central services is not readily available.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many of those currently receiving *(a)* invalidity pension and *(b)* other incapacity benefits have claimed a supplementary pension; and how many of these claims were successful;

(2) of the total now receiving invalidity benefit with a supplementary pension, how many will lose their supplementary benefit top-up when invalidity benefit is increased by 7 per cent. and the 5 per cent. abatement is restored; and what will be the estimated savings to his Department as a result of this exercise;

(3) what will be the estimated savings to his Department as a result of not paying supplementary pensions to invalidity benefit recipients.

Mr. Major: It is regretted that information is not available about the number who have claimed a supplementary pension. At December 1983, however, the latest date for which information is available, about 9,000 people receiving supplementary pension were also in receipt of an incapacity benefit — sickness benefit, invalidity pension or non-contributory invalidity pension. It is not known how many were receiving an invalidity pension. Information is not therefore available about the number who will lose their entitlement to supplementary pension when invalidity pension is increased by 7 per cent. and the 5 per cent. abatement restored. There will in any case be no overall benefit savings.

Toxocara Infection

Mr. Galley asked the secretary of State for Social Services what information is available about the prevalence of toxocara infection amongst children; and what steps are taken to prevent the spread of this desease.

Mr. Whitney: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) on 25 October at column *587*. The control of dogs in public places through local byelaws and the promotion of good hygiene through responsible pet ownership can reduce the risk of infection.

Psychogeriatric Units

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the numbers of people who have gained residence in psychogeriatric units or in the care of local authorities in the last six years in Hampshire.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not collected centrally in the precise form requested. The data which are readily available are given in the table.

Admissions to NHS mental illness hospitals and units in Hampshire of people aged 65 and over*

Year	Number of admissions Aged 65-74 years	Aged 75 years and over
1979	772	1,028
1980	799	1,212
1981	788	1,247
1982	737	1,327
1983	738	1,386
1984	762	1,422

*Figures include people admitted for short-term treatment and psychogeriatric assessment.

Community Care (Nurses)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total number of nurses in community care in the county of Hampshire for each of the last five years.

Mr. Hayhoe: Reliable, consistent data are not available in the form requested. The figures are recorded by health authority areas, whose boundaries, in this instance, are not wholly contiguous with those of the local authority.

Low Income Households

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the analysis on the number of low income households from the family expenditure survey data for 1983.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 12 November to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) at column *161*.

Dental Charges

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate the cost of extending to the end of the month in which the child's first birthday falls, the period of exemption from dental charges to those women who have borne a child;

(2) if he will estimate the cost of extending exemption from dental charges to women who become pregnant during a course of dental treatment.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that appropriate information on which to base such estimates is not available.

Dental Services

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why fluoride treatments and fissure sealing are provided under the community dental service and not under the general dental services of the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: The cost-effective use of of fissure sealants in the general dental service is currently under consideration by a joint working party of the British Dental Association and our Department. It has not yet proved possible to reach agreement with the British Dental Association on arrangements for including topical fluoride for special needs groups of children in the general dental service scale of fees.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate the cost of providing fissure sealing of permanent teeth within the general dental services of the National Health Service;

(2) if he will estimate the cost of providing fluoride treatments for all children in low fluoride areas within the general dental services of the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is not possible to estimate the cost of providing these treatments under the general dental service until the arrangements for including them in the fee scale have been agreed with the British Dental Association.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth may expect a reply to his letter to him dated 17 July and referring to J. Gardiner, Esq. of 13 Barford road, Kenilworth.

Mr. Major: I have written to my hon. Friend today.

Hospital and Community Health Services

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much of the £250 million extra spending on the National Health Service in 1986-87 compared with Cmnd. 9428 referred to in his press release 85/314 will be spent on the hospital and community health services.

Mr. Hayhoe: £157 million.

NHS (Pay and Price Increases)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his estimate of the percentage pay and price increases in the National Health Service in 1986-87 referred to in paragraph 2 of his press release 85/314;

(2) what level of pay increases for doctors, nurses, technical, administrative and ancillary staff, respectively, are allowed for in the estimates of National Health Service spending given in the autumn statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The additional £650 million expenditure on health authorities next year r epresents an increase of 6·7 per cent. over this year compared with the general inflation increase forecast of 4·5 per cent. No specific assumption has been made on NHS pay and price increases. Health authorities will have to meet pay and price increases as well as develop and improve services from within the additional resources provided and from their own growing cost improvement programmes.

Cost Improvement Programmes

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the total extra income from cost improvement programmes which will be available to health authorities in 1986-87.

Mr. Hayhoe: We expect health authorities to be able to improve upon the £150 million they plan to achieve this year but we shall not be making any estimate until we have discussed with them the plans for 1986-87 which they will be submitting shortly.

Contraception

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how many girls aged under 16 years are given contraceptive advice or treatment in family planning clinics without parental consent.

Mr. Hayhoe: In 1984 17,400 girls under 16 were seen in family planning clinics in England. Information on parental consent is not collected, but Departmental guidance makes it very clear that only exceptional cases should doctors or other professionals act without it.

Dental Care

Mr. Andrew Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what has been the number of uncompleted courses of dental treatment as indicated by the Dental Estimates Board in each year since 1965;

(2) what has been the number of dental treatments as indicated by the Dental Estimates Board in each year since 1965.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 November 1985, c. 90.]: The number of courses of dental treatment in England in each year since 1965 is set out in the following table. Information on the number of these courses which were uncompleted is not available.

	Thousands
1965	*16,970
1966	*17,700
1967	*18,642
1968	19,272
1969	19,430
1970	19,922
1971	21,151
1972	22,452
1973	23,720
1974	24,641
1975	25,904
1976	26,277
1977	26,972
1978	27,105
1979	27,165
1980	28,614
1981	29,036
1982	29,926
1983	30,506
1984	30,971

* Estimated from England and Wales figures.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There will, however, be headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one will find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc., under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

Abbeystead pumping station
Compensation 423
Explosions 423

Aberdeen
Council house sales 185w

Aberdeen Royal Infirmary 223w

ABM treaty 235w

Abortion 287w
Private hospitals 206-7w

Accidents
Youth training scheme 134-6w, 137-8w

Accounting
Nationalised industries 56w

Accounts
Small businesses 129w

Acid rain
Research 18-9w
Trees 17-8w, 63w

Acid waters review group 22-3w

Acute beds 212-6w, 286w
Greater London 286w

Additional pensions
Invalidity benefits 333w

Addresses to the Crown
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 6-11

Adjudication officers 88w, 93w

Adley, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 123
Road safety (15.11.85) 789, 793
Questions
Business statement 116
Channel crossing 81w
Northern Ireland government, Referenda 681

Administrative costs
NHS 331w

Administrative delays
Czechoslovakia Compensation Fund 298w
Driving tests 70w, 327-8w
Entry clearances 196w
Immigration appeals 179w
Income tax assessment 315-6w
Legal aid 26w
Trials 26w

Adoption
Children in care 279w

Adoption of foreign children 236w

Afghanistan
Foreign policy 58w

Africa
Agriculture 310
Banks 272w
Debts 272w
Development aid 308
Disaster relief 35-6w
Food aid from EC 34w, 183-4w
International Fund for Agricultural Development 144w
Overseas aid 296w, 308
Overseas trade 309-11
Prime Minister visits abroad 232w

Aftercare hostel grant scheme
Voluntary organisations 239w

Age
Unemployment benefits 227-8w
Youth training scheme 133w

Age of consent
Judgments 415

Agency nurses
Costs 251w
Scotland 251w

Agricultural advisory services 186-7w
Scotland 186-7w, 188w, 254-6w

Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 6-8w, 215w
Wales 215w

Agricultural land
Land use 56w

Agricultural land classification system 56w

Agricultural policy
Scotland 547

Agricultural production
Weather 189w

Agricultural products
EC internal trade 47-8w
Land drainage 277w
Prices 277w

Agricultural research
Scotland 188w

Agricultural services
Fees & charges 6-8w

Agriculture
Africa 310
EC budget 311-2w
Development aid 34-5w, 308, 310, 311-2
EC grants & loans 186w
Government assistance 184-5w
Highlands of Scotland 185w
Scotland 184-5w, 189w

Agriculture Bill 1985/86
1R (07.11.85) 118
311w

AIDS 147-8w, 149w, 198-9w
Blood transfusions 147-8w, 198-9w
Research 149w

Aids for handicapped 153w
Speech impaired 86w

Air force
Disaster relief 309

Air force bases
B52 bombers 307w

Air force flying
Compensation 258-9w

Air pollution
Research 18-9w, 22-3w
Waste disposal 551

Air routes
Australia 265w

Air safety 69w
Aircraft seats 82w
Safety measures 82w

Air traffic
Greater London 76w

Air travel
Europe 76w

Aircraft noise
Compensation 258-9w

Aircraft seats 82w
Air safety 82w

Airlines
Military aircraft 307w

Airports
St Helena 37w

Alcoholic drinks
Taxation 192w

Alcoholism
Drinking 72w
Punishment 560-1

Alexander, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 439-40
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 206

Alton, Mr David
Questions
Business statement 114, 690
Dangerous mental patients, Mental health review tribunals 111
Development aid, Agriculture 34-5w
Football, Hooliganism 291w
Hospital catering, Food hygiene 415
McCullough, Muriel, Prisoners transfers 177w
Speech impaired, Aids for handicapped 86w

Ambulance services
Pay settlements 159-60w

Amess, Mr David
Debates etc
Queens speech (06.11.85) 94-8
Questions
Charities, Christmas cards 305w
Design, Management 226w
Design Council 224w
Hospitals, Radio 281w
Training awards schemes, Industrial design 224-5w

Amey Roadstone 17w, 37w, 80w
Dept of the Environment 17w
Dept of Transport 80w
Government contracts 61w
Scottish Office 61w
Welsh Office 37w

Administrative delays
Legal aid 26-7w

Amphetamines
Scotland 65w

Ancram, Mr Michael, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary Scottish Office*
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 162
Unemployment, Greenock & Port Glasgow (08.11.85) 290-4
Questions
Amey Roadstone, Scottish Office 61w
Council house sales, Aberdeen 185w
Defective housing, Glasgow 189w
Dornoch firth, Bridges 188-9w
Environmental impact assessment, Dounreay 146w
Glasgow eastern area renewal 189w
Housing, Scotland 61w
Housing finance, Dundee 190w
Island councils, Local government expenditure 146w
Islands councils, Rate support grants 146w
Local plans 65w
Public sector housing, Government grants 189w
Public sector housing sales, Scotland 185w
Rate rebates, Scotland 555
Rates & rating, Scotland 554-5, 558
Waste disposal, Polkemmet 551

Anderson, Mr Donald
Questions
Amey Roadstone, Dept of the Environment 17w
Amey Roadstone, Dept of Transport 80w
Amey Roadstone, Scottish Office 61w
Amey Roadstone, Welsh Office 37w
Channel crossing 69w

Anglo-Irish agreement 669-70

Anglo-Irish talks 231w, 246w, 669, 671-2, 672-3, 673-4, 675-6, 677, 680, 681, 682, 683
Border security in Ireland 675
Northern Ireland 197w
Northern Ireland Government 674-5
Security 679-80
Unparliamentary expressions 683

Animal experiments
Pesticides 274w

Animal feed
Canada 546

Annual reports 323w
Civil service manpower 10-1w
Prison visitors 323w

Anti dumping duties
Japan 231w

Appeals
Limited list prescribing 152w, 283w, 413
School choice 107w
Trustee savings banks 564-5, 566

Apprentices
Government assistance to industry 130w

Archaeology (07.11.85) 119

Armed forces
Press releases 257-8w

Armed Forces Bill 1985/86
1R (07.11.85) 119

Armed forces casualties
Hospitals 93w
USA 93w

Armed forces civilians
Planning 84w

Armed forces dependents
Parental contributions 142w

Armed forces deployment
Cruise missiles 307w
NATO 84w

Armed forces pensions 140-2w
Bombings 141-2w
Costs 141w
Defence expenditure 141w

Armed forces punishment
Courts martial (07.11.85) 119

Armed forces strength
Defence industries employment 85w

Armed services youth training scheme 257w

Arms control treaties 100w

Arms exports
Chile 235w, 236w
Iran 232w
Iraq 232w

Arms trade
Israel 144w

Army
Protective clothing 257w

Arnold, Mr Tom
Questions
Citizens Advice Bureaux, Finance 305w
Pedestrian crossings, A6(M) 327w

Art works
Middlesex Crown Court 306

Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review 205-6w, 284w
Prosthetics 205w, 284w

Arts Council
Government grants 269-70w
Ministerial statements (14.11.85) 699-708
Recruitment 147w

Arts finance
Cash limits 4w
Local government reform (14.11.85) 699-708

Asbestos
Health & Safety Executive 85w
Rosyth Dockyard 84-5w
Safety standards 138w

Ashby, Mr David
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 127, 176, 182-6
Questions
Middlesex Crown Court, Building repairs 306

Ashdown, Mr Paddy
Debates etc.
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 454-5
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 481
Questions
COCOM, Exports 298w
COCOM, Technology transfer 297-8w
COCOM, UK contributions 233w
Data Protection registrar, Civil service manpower 241-2w
Data Protection registrar, Costs 241w
Data Protection Registrar, Departmental forms 240-1w
Data Protection Registrar, Disclosure of information 241w
Data Protection Registrar, Management techniques 242w
Defence, Technology transfer 194w
Design, Management 223-4w
English Industrial Estates Corporation, Government grants 192w
English Industrial Estates Corporation, Public sector assets 305w
Grocery trade, Market share 190-1w
High technology, USA 233w
Income tax, Tax yields 124-5w
Small businesses, Accounts 129w
Small businesses, Statistics 130w
Strategic defence initiative, Defence research 257w
Strategic defence initiative, European Commission 291w
Trident, Testing 139-40w
VAT, Companies 195w

Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 438
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 337-40
Questions
Crown immunity, Hospitals 416, 426
Liver diseases, Death 200-2w
Liver diseases, Transplant surgery 200-2w
Railway fares, Stoke on Trent 301
Special schools, Deaf 267-8w

Atkins, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Innovation (12.11.85) 332-3

Atkinson, Mr David
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 33, 92
Questions
Rolling stock, London to Weymouth railway line 68w
VAT, British Legion poppies 270w
Wallenberg, Raoul 234w, 298w, 299w
Wallenberg, Raoul, EC action 236w

Auctions 42w

Audio equipment
Taxation 44w

Australia
Air routes 265w

Autumn statement
Ministerial statements (12.11.85) 431-43

Availability for work 181w
Social security benefits disqualification 229w
Supplementary benefits 88w

Average earnings
Scotland 65w

Aviation fuels
Fire prevention 174w

A1 70-1w
Road safety 303, 304
Road safety barriers 303

A1 (M) 330w
Hatfield 330w
Road construction 330w

A6 (M) 327w
Pedestrian crossings 327w

A11 127w, 326w
Lorries 326w
Road traffic 127w

A12 263w
Road safety barriers 263w

A38 77-8w
Road safety barriers 77-8w

A41 70-1w

A68 60w
Bypasses 60w
Road construction 60w

A127 73w
Road accidents 73w

A140 175-6w, 265w
Road accidents 265w
Road construction 175-6w
Road traffic 265w

A629 74w
Road construction 74w

A650 74w
Road construction 74w

Bagier, Mr Gordon A T
Debates etc
Road safety (15.11.85) 813-4
Questions
Motorways, Police 304-5

Bail hostels 237-8w

Bail verification schemes 238w
Magistrates courts 238w

Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth, *Secretary of State for the Environment*
Debates etc
Local Government Bill 1985/86, 1R (7.11.85)
Canary Wharf, Public inquiries 120w
Council housing, Defective housing 115w
Dept of the Environment, Public expenditure 111-5w
European Regional Development Fund 24w
Local government, Legislation 310w

Baker, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Cruelty to children 156w
Income tax assessment, Administrative delays 315-6w
Road tax, Caravans 129w
Wastes, Recycling 165-6w

Baldry, Mr Tony
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 728-9, 738, 755-6, 762-5, 771
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 450-1
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 474, 487
Questions
Air force flying, Compensation 258-9w
Child benefit 149w
Development aid, Agriculture 310
Employment opportunities, Charities 226-7w
Road construction, Expenditure 74w

Bangladesh
Illegal immigrants 179w
Immigrants 179w
Temporary immigrants 179w

Bank of England 124w

Bankruptcy
Great Grimsby 305w

Banks
Africa 272w
Henry Ansbacher 124w

Banks, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 708
Business questions point of order (14.11.85) 698
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 458
Questions
Arts finance, Cash limits 4w
Mini-Enterprises in Schools Project 46w

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 702
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 124-5
Questions
Blackwall tunnel 80w
Brixton Young Families Housing Aid Association 120w
Business statement 698
Civil engineering, Civil service recruitment 79w
Concessionary fares, Pensioners 296
County Hall 221w
County Hall, Listed buildings 221w
Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission, Civil service manpower 20w

Local government elections, Voting rights 243w
Local government expenditure, Brent & Harrow Engineering Group Training Association 120w
Local government expenditure, Hounslow Engineering Group Training Association 120w
Local government reform, Greater London 262w
Local government reform, Greater London Council 119w
Local government reform, Local government property 22w
Local government reform, Local government staff 21w, 22w, 118-9w
Local government reform, Waste disposal 20w
Local government staff, Greater London Council 22w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Employment 309w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Expenditure 309w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Property transfer 309-10w
London Residuary Body, Public appointmemts 220w
NHS, Contracts for services 160w
Property transfer, London boroughs 21w
Public appointments 234w
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, Conferences 221w
Rate demands 221w
Rehousing, London boroughs 19-20w
River Thames, Bridges 80w
Road tax, Police authorities 264w
Road traffic control, Greater London 81w
Road works, Greater London 262-3w
Roads, Local government reform 81w
South Bank, Local government staff 147w
Taxicards, Greater London 302-3
Taxicards, Greater London Council 71w
Waste disposal, Greater London 221w
Woolwich ferry 80w

Barber, Lord
South Africa 60w

Barnet Health Authority 154w

Barton Mills 127w
Roads 326w

BBC
Metropolitan Police 123w
Public appointments 423

Beaumont-Dark, Mr Anthony
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 592
Questions
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 127w

Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Questions
British Rail Engineering 78w
Food aid from EC 310
Social security reviews, Social Fund 419
Supplementary Benefit (Requirements & Resources) Misc Prov Regulations 1985 151w

Bed & breakfast accommodation
Homelessness 16w

Beggs, Mr Roy
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 680

Beith, Mr A J
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 126
Questions
Developing countries, Debts 36w
Development aid, Agriculture 308
Government Communication Headquarters, Kane, Jock 99-101w
HC staff, Security vetting 66w
Overseas aid 34w
South Africa, Commonwealth 60w

Belgium
Extradition 291w

Bell, Mr Stuart
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 586
Questions
Anglo-Irish 676
Northern Ireland Assembly, Elections 671

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 454

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 509-12

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Debates etc
Okehampton Bypass (Confirmation of Orders) Bill, Procedure (14.11.85) 710
Queen's speech, Social Services (11.11.85) 366-7, 393
Questions
Business statement 115-6, 695
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 121w
Cruise missiles, 257w
Cruise missiles, Armed forces deployment 307w
Diplomatic staff 142-3w
Police, Plastic bullets 176w
Public expenditure, Education finance 425-6
School choice, Appeals 107w
Students, Social security benefits 151w
Trident submarines, Trident missiles 307w

Benyon, Mr W
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 64-7

Bermingham, Mr Gerald
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 372-3, 379-80, 394
Questions
Custodial treatment, Men 244w
HC staff, Security vetting 66w
House of Commons Staff, Official secrets 101w

Bicycles
Railway travel 301

Biffen, Rt Hon John, *Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons*
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 768
Private Members time (07.11.85) 120
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 645-51
Questions
Business statement 112-8, 687-98
House of Commons Staff, Official secrets 101w

Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Questions
Business statement 690-1
Extradition, Cross border cooperation in Ireland 177w
Northern Ireland government, Devolution 677
Overseas aid, Ethiopia 310
Pre-trial procedures, Northern Ireland 26w
Thailand, Piracy 195w

Bilateral aid
Central America 36w

Bill of Rights
Northern Ireland 684-5

Billing
Legal aid 26-7w

Bioengineering
Sugar beet 274-5w

Birkenhead
Unemployment 52-4w

Birmingham City Council 310w
Local government functions 310w
Local government reform 310w
Rate support grants 310w

Black economy
Costs 195w
Employment level 131w

Blackburn, Dr John G
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 706

Blackwall tunnel 80w

Blair, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 127
Questions
Banks, Africa 272w
British Gas Corporation, Gas levy 55w, 56w
Health services, Expendiutre 94w
Local government staff 24w
Local government staff, Northern Ireland 97-8w
Local government staff, Scotland 66w
Local government staff, Wales 39w
Nationalised industries, Accounting 56w
Oil reserves, Income 126w
Public sector assets, Privatisation 272w, 273w

Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 242-3

Blind
Computers 278w

Blood
Screening 147-8w

Blood donors 422

Blood plasma 422

Blood transfusions
Aids 147-8w, 198-9w

Blundeston Prison 177w
Prison administration 177w

Board & lodging charges 91-2w, 94w, 150w, (11.11.85) 318-400w, 420
Elderly 91-2w
Lothian 150w
Orders & regulations 94w
Social security abuse 420-1
Supplementary benefits 91-2w, 94w, 150w, 420
Youth employment 420

Body armour 257w

Boiler conversion scheme 295w

Bombings
Armed forces pensions 141-2w
Criminal injuries compensation 141-2w, 682
IRA 682

Books
Local government expenditure 314-5w

Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Questions
Smith houses, Mortgages 117w

Border security in Ireland 245w
Anglo-Irish talks 675

Bottomley, Mr Peter, *Under-Secretary of State for Employment*
Questions
Asbestos, Safety standards 138w
Employment, EC action 182-3w
Gas accidents, Explosions 52w
Handicapped workers, Manpower 180w
Health & Safety Executive, Electricity 179-80w
Industrial health & safety, Computer terminals 301w
Parental leave, EC action 10w
Pay deductions 10w
Quota of handicapped workers 138-9w
School leaving, Take-up of employment 302w
School leaving, Youth employment 302-4w
Trade union rule books 49-50w

Truck Acts 181-2w
Wages councils, Greater London 179w
Wages councils, Minimum wage 301w

Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 390, 391
Questions
Education finance 102-6w
House renovation grants, Departmental circulars 25-6w
Limited list prescribing 413
NHS finance 160-1w
Transport Act 1982, Road traffic offences 1w

Bournemouth to Weymouth Railway Line
Railway electrification 78w

Bowden, Mr Andrew
Questions
Pensioners, Housing benefits 148w
Pensioners, Personal savings 410-1

Boyes, Mr Roland
Questions
Armed forces, Press releases 257-8w
Limited list prescribing, Complaints 414

Boyle, Lt Col 83w

Boyson, Dr Rhodes, *Minister of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland, Government grants 246w
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland 670, 671
Salmon, Northern Ireland 245w
Ulster Agriculture Organisation Society, Government grants 245-6w
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 670
Youth training scheme, Northern Ireland 93-4w

Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Questions
Czechoslovakia Compensation Fund, Administrative delays 298w
Quota of handicapped workers 138-9w

Brampton bypass 77w

"Brass Tacks" 123w
Garner, Roy 123w
Police informers 123w

Bray, Dr Jeremy
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 437-8
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 41-4, 54
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 479
Questions
CERN, UK contributions 49w

Breathalysers 244-5w, 264w

Brent
Homelessness 16w
Housing capital allocations 16w
Housing Corporation 15-6w

Brent Peoples Housing Association 15-6w

Brent & Harrow Engineering Group Training Association 120w
Local government expenditure 120w

Brentwood bypass 263w
Road safety barriers 263w

Bridges
Dornoch firth 188-9w
River Thames 80w

British Airports Authority
Privatisation 75w

British Airways
Privatisation 75w

British citizenship
Legislation 243w
Northern Ireland 425

British Council
Government grants 197w

British Deaf Association 121-2w, 268w
Codes of practice 121-2w

British Gas Corporation
External financing limits 55w
Gas levy 55w, 56w

"British Gas Corporation Annual Report & Accounts, 1984/85" 55w

British Legion poppies
VAT 270w

British Rail
Capital investment 75w
Procurement 71w
Railway catering 80w
Railway timetables 176w
Rolling stock 68w

British Rail Engineering 72-3w, 78-9w
Springburn 78-9w

British Railways Board
Railway workers 72w

British Steel Corporation
Factory closures 184w
Gartcosh 184w

British Telecom
Price increases 45w
Public telephones (15.11.85) 849-50
Security vetting 231-2w

Brittan, Rt Hon Leon, *Secretary of State for Trade & Industry*
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 475-85, 487, 488
Questions
Mini-Enterprises in Schools Project 46w

Brixton Young Families Housing Aid Association 120w
Local government expenditure 120w

Broadcasting
Football 44-5w
Restrictive trade practices 44-5w

Broadcasting controls
Home Office 178w

Brooke, Mr Peter, *Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science*
Questions
CERN 109-10w
CERN, Government grants 109w
CERN, UK contributions 49w
High Energy Particle Physics Review Group 110w
"Higher Education Consultation Paper" 267w
Medical research, Expenditure 266-7w
Medical Research Council, Expenditure 107w
Nuclear physics 109w
Open University, Government grants 49w
Overseas students, Tuition fees 173w
Polytechnics 108w
Science & Technology research, Research finance 108-10w

Brown, Mr Gordon
Questions
Armed forces strength, Defence industries employment 85w
Employment opportunities 51w
National income, South East region 45-6w
Rosyth Dockyard, Asbestos 84-5w
Severe weather payments 93w
Small businesses, Employment opportunities 130w
Small businesses, Insolvency 130w

Brown, Mr Hugh
Questions
Prison overcrowding, Scotland 549
Public sector housing sales, Scotland 185w
Social security reviews 418

Brown, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 631
Questions
Civil service manpower, Annual reports 10-1w

Brown, Mr Robert C
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 624

Brown, Mr Ron
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 560
De Lorean, John 680
Drug abuse, Scotland 187w

Browne, Mr John
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 440
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 632-4

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Questions
Agricultural advisory services, Scotland 186-7w
Teachers, Scotland 553

Bruinvels, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Road safety (15.11.85) 793, 833-7
Questions
Breathalysers 244-5w, 264w
Business statement 117, 694
Drinking & driving, Christmas 265w
Drinking & driving, Convictions 245w
Drinking & driving, Publicity 264-5w
Local authorities in Northern Ireland, Sinn Fein 677
Motorways, Road safety 76w
Prime Minister official engagements 101w, 233w
Uganda, Compensation 196-7w
Young people, Contraceptives 150w

Bryan, Sir Paul
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 703-4

Buchan, Mr Norman
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 699, 708
Questions
Scotland, Teachers 557

Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick, *Minister of State for Energy*
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Gas levy 55w, 56w
Dept of Energy, Cash limits 12-3w
Gas safety, Elderly 225-6w
Gas tariffs, Price increases 296w
MSV Tharos 53-5w
Nationalised industries, Accounting 56w
Standing charges 295w

Buck, Sir Antony
Questions
Armed forces dependents, Parental contributions 142w
Channel crossing, Upper Waiting Hall 326w

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 719

Building alterations
Frankland Prison 324w

Building Inspectors 26w

Building regulations
Certification 26w

Building repairs
Middlesex Crown Court 306
Wandsworth Prison 321w

Building societies
Defective housing 117w
Legislation 3-4w

Bureaucracy
Small businesses 138w

Burnham Committee 2w

Burt, Mr Alistair

Debates etc
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 505-9
Questions
British citizenship, Legislation 243w
Wallenberg, Raoul 143w, 298w
Wallenberg, Raoul, Death 145w

Bus crews
Outer London boroughs 298-9
Pay 298-9

Bus services
Competition 81w
Leicestershire 81w

Buses
Death 328w
Driving licences 263-4w
Driving offences 263w
Driving tests 263w
Motorways 176w
Road accidents 328w
Road safety 328w
Speed limits 176w
Tachographs 75w, 263w

Business
EC law 138w
Voting rights 243w

Business questions
Speakers rulings & statements (14.11.85) 696

Business statement 112-8, 687-98
Speakers rulings & statements (07.11.85) 115

Butcher, Mr John, *Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry*
Debates etc
Public telephones (15.11.85) 851-4
Questions
Audio equipment, Taxation 44w
British Telecom, Price increases 45w
Design, Management 223-4w, 226w
Design Council 224w
EUREKA 191w, 225w
Grocery trade, Market share 190-1w
Information technology centres, Government grants 224w
Insolvency, East Anglia 42-3w
National income, South East region 45-6w
Personal records, Dept of Trade & Industry 306w
Postal workers, Pay 40-1w
Privatisation, Shares 225w
Science & technology research, Questionnaires 42w
Training awards schemes, Industrial design 224-5w

Butterfill, Mr John
Debates tec
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 457

Buyers premiums 42w

By election writs
Tyne Bridge (12.11.85) 407

Bypasses
A68 60w
Road construction (07.11.85) 118

B52 bombers 307w
Air force bases 307w

B197 127w
Road traffic 127w

Cable television
Northern Ireland 322w

Cable & Wireless 4w
Government shareholding 4w

Callaghan, Rt Hon James
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 141-3

Calling of Members
Speakers rulings & statements (11.11.85) 312, (12.11.85) 442, (13.11.85) 563, (14.11.85) 685-6, 696

Camberwell Green 238w

Cambridgeshire
Police 121w

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates etc
Business questions point of order (07.11.85) 118
Matthew Brown, Monopolies & Mergers Commission reports (13.11.85) 570
Prime Ministers question time point of order (14.11.85) 686
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 20
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 126, 128, 129
Questions
Business statement 117
Falkland Islands, Expenditure 197w
Food & Environment Protection Act 1985 273w
NHS, Crown immunity 150w
Pesticides, health hazards 273w
Pesticides, Stubble burning 273w
Prosecutions, Police 306
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland 671
Railway track, Repairs & maintenance 76w
Road safety, A1 304
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 670
Urban development grants 24-5w
Urban programme, Cumbria 168-70w

Canada
Animal feed 546

Canary Wharf 23w, 120w
Isle of Dogs Enterprise Zone 23w
Public inquiries 120w

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Debates etc
Darfield main colliery (12.11.85) 541
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 61-4, 72
Questions
Hospitals, Crown immunity 147w
Prosecutions, Scotland 558-9
Teachers, Pay 186w
Teachers, Scotland 552

Capital investment
British Rail 75w
Public expenditure 425
Transport infrastructure 304
Trent Regional Health Authority 199-200w

Car hire
Licensing 82w

Caravans
Road tax 129w

Carlisle, Mr Kenneth
Questions
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Cash limits 8w

Carter-Jones, Mr Lewis
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 357, 359-61, 395
Questions
Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review 205-6w
Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review, Prosthetics 284w
Cinemas, Handicapped 122w
Elderly, Personal social services 147w
Reform of social security consultation paper 410

Cartwright, Mr John
Questions
Car hire, Licensing 82w
Commissions for local administration 24w
East London river crossing, Ministers domestic visits 328w
House purchase assistance scheme 117w
Pesticides, Animal experiments 274w
Road works, Motorways 300
Roads, Greater London 70w
Urban programme, Public expenditure 684
Woolwich ferry, Local government finance 261w
Woolwich ferry, Local government reform 261w

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 733, 736, 764-5, 767, 772
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 458
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 683
Legionnaires disease, Stafford 415-6

Cash limits
Arts finance 4w
Dept of Energy 12-3w
Dept of the Environment 25w
Dept of Trade & Industry 46w
Dept of Transport 83w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 8w
Intervention Board 14w
Ministry of Defence 85w
Northern Ireland Office 96w
Scottish Office 66w

Catering
Wandsworth Prison 321w

Celaton Laboratory Research 28w, 91w
Cosmetic Products (Safety) Regulations 1984 28w
Foetal tissue 91w

Cement
Imports 44w

Censorship
Prisoners mail 323w

Centaur military vehicle 236w
Chile 236w

Central America
Bilateral aid 36w
Commonwealth Development Corporation 36w
EC aid 145-6w

CERN 109-10w
Government grants 109w
UK contributions 49w

Certification
Building regulations 26w
Legal aid 26w

Cervical cancer
Screening 154w

Chalker, Mrs Lynda, *Minister of State for Transport*
Debates etc
Road safety (15.11.85) 787-95, 799, 800, 844-8
Questions
Amey Roadstone, Dept of Transport 80w
A1, Road safety 303
A1 M, Hatfield 330w
A11, Road traffic 127w
A12, Road safety barriers 263w
A38, Road safety barriers 77-8w
A127, Road accidents 73w
A140, Road construction 175-6w
A140, Road traffic 265w
A629, Road construction 74w
Blackwall tunnel 80w
Brampton bypass 77w
Breathalysers 264w
British Rail Engineering 78w
Buses, Motorways 176w
Buses, Tachographs 263w
B197, Road traffic 127w
Civil engineering, Civil service recruitment 79w
Dartford tunnel, Road construction 83w
Dial-a-ride, Greater London 75w, 302
Drinking & driving 72w
Drinking & driving, Christmas 129w, 265w
Drinking & driving, Publicity 264-5w
Driving tests, Administrative delays 70w, 327-8w
East London river crossing, Ministers domestic visits 328w
European Road Safety Year, UK contributions 175w
Handicapped, Concessionary fares 82w
Handicapped drivers, Orange badge scheme 128w

Local government expenditure, Road works 299-300
Local government reform, Greater London 262w
Lorries, A11 326w
Lorries, Greater London 78w
Midland link motorways 71w
Midland link motorways, Road works 329w
Motor vehicle testing 68w
Motorways, Lighting 259-60w
Motorways, Lorries 73w
Motorways, Police 304-5
Motorways, Road construction 262w
Motorways, Road safety 76w, 304
Motorways, Road traffic control 78w
M1, Road accidents 260w
M1, Road construction 260w
M1, Road traffic 76w, 260-1w
M1, Road traffic control 79w
M25, Road construction 70-1w
M25, Road safety 175w
M25, Road works 77w
M40, Road construction 327w
M45, Lighting 259w
M66, Public inquiries 79-80w
North Devon link road, Road construction 81w
Okehampton bypass, Road construction 329w
Pedestrian crossings, A6(M) 327w
River Thames, Bridges 80w
Road accidents, Buses 328w
Road construction, Expenditure 74w
Road safety, Buses 328w
Road traffic, Motorways 327w
Road traffic control, Greater London 81w
Road traffic control, Roundabouts 74w
Road works, Greater London 262-3w
Road works, Local government expenditure 300
Road works, Motorways 300
Roads, Greater London 70w
Roads, Local government reform 81w
Roads, Repairs & maintenance 300-1
Severn bridge, Repairs & maintenance 69-70w
Taxicards, Greater London 261w, 302-3
Transport of hazardous materials 128w
Woolwich ferry 80w
Woolwich ferry, Local government finance 261w
Woolwich ferry, Local government reform 261w

Channel crossing 69w, 81w
Disclosure of information 329w
Environmental impact assessment 128w
Exhibitions 326w
Upper Waiting Hall 84w, 326w

Channel tunnel 69w

Channon, Rt Hon Paul, *Minister of State for Trade*
Questions
Cement, Imports 44w
Construction materials, Spain 191w
Electronic equipment, USA 41-2w
Import controls, Greece 192w
Profits, Greece 192w
UK companies abroad, USA 101w
VAT, Portugal 192w

Chapman, Mr Sydney
Questions
M25, Road construction 70-1w
North West Thames Regional Health Authority, Expenditure 154w
Overseas aid, Africa 308
Pharmacists, Recruitment 158w

Charitable trusts
Greater London 25w

Charities
Christmas cards 305w
Employment opportunities 226-7w
Government grants 226-7w
PSV operators licences 263w

Chatham dockyard 305w

Chicago Pacific 194w
Takeovers 194w

Child benefit 149w
Education of children at home 149w
Expenditure 283-4w
Social security benefits disqualification 149w
Social security benefits rates 283-4w

Child care
Educational finance 9-10w
School meals 9-10w

Child dependency additions 158w
Invalidity benefits 158w

Children
Police custody 251w
Toxocara canis 334w

Children in care
Adoption 279w

Childrens rights
Education 110w

Chile
Arms exports 235w, 236w
Centaur military vehicle 236w
Democracy 144w, 235w
Human rights 235w
Political prisoners 143w
Political systems 235w

Chinese community 29-30w, 167-8w
Government grants to local authorities 29-30w
Local government staff 29-30w
Urban programme 167-8w

Chope, Mr Christopher
Questions
Parental leave, EC action 10w

Christmas
Drinking & driving 129w, 265w

Christmas bonus 149w

Christmas cards 305w
Charities 305w

Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970 128w, 153w

Churchill, Mr Winston
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 132, 138-41

Cinemas
Handicapped 31w, 122w
Safety 122w
Spinal Injuries Association 31w

Citizens Advice Bureaux
Finance 305w

City of London
Fraud 305-6

Civil Aviation Authority 69w

Civil defence
Crosshouse Hospital 547-8
Hospitals 93w
Prestwick Airport 547-8
Welwyn & Hatfield District Council 120-1w

Civil engineering
Civil service recruitment 79w

Civil servants
Immunity from prosecution 2-3w
Ministerial statements 100w
Theft 2-3w

Civil servants social security reviews 92w

Civil Service Benevolent Fund 222w

Civil service department
Computers in government departments 315w

Civil service manpower
Annual reports 10-1w
COCOM 233w
Data Protection Registrar 241-2w, 325w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 330-1w
Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission 20w
Home Office Immigration & Nationality Department 319w
Prosecutions 307
Scottish Development Agency 251w
Social security abuse 180w

Civil service recruitment
Civil engineering 79w

Clark, Mr Alan, *Under-Secretary of State for Employment*
Questions
Availability for work, Social security benefits disqualification 229w
Community programme 181w
Community programme, Take-up of employment 137w
Dept of Employment, Regional investigation teams 18[illegible]
Employment 132-4w, 181w
Employment by sector 50-2w
Employment level, Statistics 131w
Employment opportunities 51w
Pay, Low pay 180-2w
Redundancy, Merseyside 227w, 228w
Unemployment 132w, 137w
Unemployment, Birkenhead 52-4w
Unemployment, Handicapped workers 227w
Unemployment, Holiday leave 228w
Unemployment, Knowsley 302w
Unemployment, Merseyside 302w
Unemployment, Redundancy 227w
Unemployment, Single women 229w
Unemployment, Students 228w
Unemployment, Wandsworth 49w
Unemployment benefits, Age 227-8w
Youth unemployment, Portsmouth 302w

Clark, Dr Michael
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 349, 376
Questions
Aids for handicapped 153w
A127, Road accidents 73w

Clark, Sir William
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 437
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 611-3
Questions
Occupational pensions, Investment 418
Public expenditure, Capital investment 425

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth, *Paymaster General*
Debates etc
Employment schemes, Ministerial statements (12.11.85) 444-60
Flannery, Martin, Members attendance (12.11.85) 462
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 488, 526-31
Questions
Employment opportunities, Charities 226-7w

Clarke, Mr Tom
Debates etc
Gartcosh Steelworks, Public petitions (12.11.85) 535
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 22-3
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 479
Questions
British Steel Corporation, Gartcosh 184w
Business statement 117-8, 691
Development aid, Lome convention 309
Local plans 65w

Clay, Mr Bob
Debates etc
Oral question time intervention (14.11.85) 678
Questions
Handicapped drivers, Orange badge scheme 128w
Invalidity benefits, Additional pensions 333w

Invalidity benefits, Child dependency additions 158w
Non-contributory invalidity pension, Social security recipients 280w
Social security benefits rates, Supplementary benefits 280w

Clement, Harry 123w
Interviews 123w

Clinical psychologists 210-2w, 248-50w

Closure of debate (12.11.85) 407-8

Club licensing
Fees & charges 33w

Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Questions
Community dental services 335w
Dental charges exemptions, Pregnant women 334-5w
Dental services, NHS 335w
European Regional Development Fund, Wales 38w
Magnox reactors, Plutonium 55w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Costs 55w
Nuclear installations, Nuclear safety 195-6w
Nuclear non proliferation treaty 59-60w
Orthopaedics, Hospital waiting lists 89-91w
Plutonium, Exports 55w, 59w

Coal firing scheme 295w
Government grants 295w

Coal mine closures
Darfield Main colliery (12.11.85) 536-44

Coal mining
Industrial disputes 121w, 560

Coastal areas
Wales 127w

Cockeram, Mr Eric
Questions
Arts Council, Government grants 269-70w

Cocks, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 491-4
Questions
"Obtaining Better Value from Further Education" 24w

COCOM
Civil service manpower 233w
Exports 298w
Technology transfer 297-8w
UK contributions 233w

Codes of practice
British Deaf Association 121-2w
Companies 129w
Foetal tissue 91w

Cohen, Mr Harry
Questions
Agricultural products, EC internal trade 47-8w
Computers in government departments, Civil service department 315w
Deportation, Stateless persons 320w
District health authorities, Pay settlements 200w
Electoral register, Disclosure of information 242w
EUREKA 191w
Garner, Roy, Costs 178w
Garner, Roy, Television programmes 178w
Garner, Roy, 'Brass Tacks' 123w
Henry Ansbacher, Banks 124w
Home Office Immigration & Nationality Department, Civil service manpower 319w
Housing policy, "Home Improvement Consultation Paper" 116w
Immigration rules, Refugees 319w
Iron & steel industry, Mexico 47w
Meat, Growth promoting hormones 164w
Metropolitan Police, Expenditure 317-8w
M25, Road safety 175w
M25, Road works 77w
Personal records, Dept of Trade & Industry 306w
Police national computer, Inquiries 178w
Prison hospitals, Manpower 177w
Prison medical services, NHS 177w
Prisoners, Drugs 177-8w
Residential care of children, Northern Ireland 247w
Security vetting, British Telecom 231-2w
Travel documents 319-20w

Coleman, Mr Donald
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 72-4

Colliery review procedure (12.11.85) 536-44

Colouring Matter in Food Regulations 1973 164w

Colvin, Mr Michael
Questions
Africa, International Fund for Agricultural Development 144w
Armed services youth training scheme 257w
Aviation fuels, Fire prevention 174w
Dept of Employment, Regional investigation teams 180w
Employment level, Statistics 131w
"Marine Pilotage Consultation Paper" 82w
Milk, Production quotas 163w
Opportunities for volunteering scheme 418-9
Public Works Loan Board, Interest rates 124w
Retirement age, Costs 157w
Working Party on Pesticide Residues 163w
Working Party on Pesticide Residues Report, 1977/81 163w

Commission for Racial Equality 33w
Complaints 33w
Costs 33w
Flather, Shreela 33-4w
Manpower 32-3w
Wales 33-4w
Welsh language 32-3w

Commissions for local administration 24w

Commodity agreements 143w

Common agricultural policy 272w
Expenditure 276-7w

Commonwealth
South Africa 60w

Commonwealth Development Corporation
Central America 36w

Communication
USA 83w

Community care
Hampshire 334w
NHS finance 335w
Nurses 334w

Community dental services 335w

Community health services
Consultants 86-8w

Community hospitals 421

Community nurses 148w
Manpower 87w

Community programme 181w
Take-up of employment 137w

Companies
Codes of practice 129w
Disclosure of information 241w
VAT 195w

Company liquidations
Contracts for services 160w
Dundee 254w
Great Grimsby 305w
Hampshire 306w

Company taxation
USA 124w

Compensation
Abbeystead pumping station 423
Air force flying 258-9w
Aircraft noise 258-9w
Custodial treatment 242w
Czechoslovakia (13.11.85) 662-8
Local government staff 118-9w, 165w
Uganda 196-7w

Competition
Bus services 81w

Complaints
Commission for Racial Equality 33w
Limited list prescribing 414

Complaints against police
Groce, Cherry 243w

Compulsory purchase
London Docklands Development Corporation 308w

Computer privacy 244w
Government departments 306w

Computer terminals
Industrial health & safety 301w
Pregnant women 301w

Computers
Blind 278w

Computers in government departments
Civil service department 315w

Computers in schools
Finance 295w

Concessionary fares 72w
Handicapped 82w
Local government reform 295-6
Pensioners 296

Conditions of employment
Independent prosecution service 170-1w
Local government staff 223w
Prosecutions 307
School teachers 553
Teachers 553-4
Youth training scheme 134w

Confederation of British Industry
Small businesses 426
Transport infrastructure 304

Conferences
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre 221w

Construction
Hospitals 201w, 285-6w
London docklands railway 76w
School buildings 173-4w
West Lothian Hospital 251w

Construction costs
M1 260w
M40 327w
Okehampton bypass 329w
Wandsworth Prison 321w

Construction materials
Import controls 191w
Spain 191w

Consultants
Community health services 86-8w
Dept of Transport 74w

Contingency reserve 309, 310
Overseas aid 309

Contraception
Young people 336w

Contraceptives
Family doctors 281w
Young people 150w, 414-5

Contracts for services
Company liquidations 160w
Diplomatic service 101w
NHS 154w, 160w

Control orders 308w
Housing Act 1964 308w

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities 186w

Convictions
Drinking & driving 30w, 245w
Juries 27w

Conway, Mr Derek
Questions
Osborne House 222w

Cookstown High School 95-6w

Cook, Mr Robin
Questions
West Lothian Hospital, Construction 251w

Coombs, Mr Simon
Questions
Electorate 282-4w
Heart diseases, Upper Waiting Hall 282w

Corbett, Mr Robin
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 456
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 172
Questions
Local government functions, Birmingham City Council 310w
Local government functions, Local government reform 310w
Travel concessions 296
Urban housing renewal unit 116w

Corbett, Phil 123w

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 237, 271-5
Questions
Business statement 698

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 702
Queens speech, Social services (11.11.85) 321, 324
Questions
Sunday trading 684

Corrie, Mr John
Questions
Agriculture, Scotland 189w
Scottish Office, Cash limits 66w
Severe weather payments, Scotland 547

Cosmetic Products (Safety) Regulations 1984 28w, 43-4w
Celaton Laboratory Research 28w
Jacobson Chemicals 28w

Cosmetics industry
Foetal tissue 43-4w, 198w
Pituitary glands 66-7w

Couchman, Mr James
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 6-8w
Intervention Board, Cash limits 14w

Council house sales
Aberdeen 185w
Great Grimsby 118w

Council housing
Defective housing 15w, 115w, 116w
Great Grimsby 117w
Housing standards 15w
Thamesmead 424

Council of Europe
Foetal tissue 198w

Council tenants
Subsidies 15w

Country houses 22w

County Hall 221w
Listed buildings 221w

Courts martial
Armed forces punishment (07.11.85) 119

Coventry
Supplementary benefits 151w

Cox, Mr Tom
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 76-8
Questions
Adoption of foreign children 236w
Defence contracts, International cooperation 194w
Dial-a-ride, Greater London 75w
Health & Safety Executive, Electricity 179-80w
Hospital waiting lists, Peterborough 412
Prison employment 324w
Prison governors, Prison administration 324w
Prisons, Crown immunity 176w
St James Hospital, Wandsworth 153w
Sudan, Foreign relations 34w
Unemployment, Wandsworth 49w
Wages councils, Greater London 179w
Wandsworth prison, Building repairs 321w
Wandsworth prison, Catering 321w
Wandsworth prison, Prison staff 321-2w

Craigen, Mr Jim
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 67-70
Trustee savings banks, Prime Ministers questions (12.11.85) 429, 430
Trustee savings banks, Standing Order No 10 applications (12.11.85) 463
Questions
Housing, Scotland 61w
Legionnaires disease, Glasgow 416
Owner occupied housing, Subsidies 15w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Scotland 99w
Public sector assets, Income 125w
Scottish Council (Development & Industry) 186w
Trustee savings banks, Privatisation 564

Cranbourne, Viscount
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 683
Business statement 697
Chile, Democracy 144w
Irish sailors & soldiers land trust 144w
Railway electrification, Bournemouth to Weymouth Railway Line 78w

Crash barriers 263w

Criminal injuries compensation
Bombings 141-2w, 682

Criminal investigation
Drug crimes 184w
Ross, Kenneth 123w
Sub post offices 244w

Criminal proceedings
Crown immunity 558-9

Critchley, Mr Julian
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 143-4

Crop spraying 56-7w
Urban areas 56-7w

Cross border cooperation in Ireland 245w
Extradition 177w

Crosshouse Hospital 547-8
Civil defence 547-8

Crouch, Mr David
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 707
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 441
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 675-6

Crown Courts
Remand in custody 171w
Summary trial 319w

Crown immunity 147w, 150w, 176w, 558-9
Criminal proceedings 558-9
Hospitals 147w, 415-6, 426, 559
NHS 150w
Prisons 176w
Scotland 559

Crown Prosecution Service 124w, 170-1w

Crowther, Mr Stan
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 520-1

Crozier, Fred 95-6w
Members correspondence 95-6w

Cruelty to children 156w

Cruise missiles 257w
Armed forces deployment 307w

Cumbria
Public expenditure 671
Urban development grants 169w
Urban programme 168-70w

Cunningham, Dr John
Questions
Channel crossing, Environmental impact assessment 128w
European Regional Development Fund 24w

Currie, Mrs Edwina
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 330
Road safety (15.11.85) 827-30
Questions
Trent Regional Health Authority, Capital investment 199-200w
Urban development grants 15w

Custodial treatment
Compensation 242w
Men 244w

Customs Duties (ECSC) (No. 2) Order 1985 (12.11.85) 464

Cyprus
Official secrets 682

Czechoslovakia
Compensation (13.11.85) 662-8

Czechoslovakia Compensation Fund 298w
Administrative delays 298w

Daily Mail 109-10, 307

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 441
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 455
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 222, 266-9, 259
Questions
Business statement 114
EUREKA, Finance 48w
Falkland Islands, War Cabinet 27-8w
Government Communications Headquarters, Joint speech research unit 84w
Kidneys, Transplant surgery 158-9w
Ministerial statements, Civil servants 100w
Ministerial statements, Public Record Office 231w
Music education, Educational finance 173w
St Helena, Airports 37w
Trustee savings banks, Privatisation 565-6
Waste disposal, Polkemmet 551

Dangerous mental patients 110-11
Mental health review tribunals 111
Newspaper press 111
Pickering, Peter 109-10
Special hospitals 287w

Darfield Main colliery (12.11.85) 536-44
Coal mine closures (12.11.85) 536-44

Dartford tunnel 83w
Road construction 83w

Data Protection Act 1984 241w, 244w, 324-5w, 325-6w

Data Protection Registrar 240-1w, 241-2w, 324-5w, 325-6w
Civil service manpower 241-2w, 325w
Costs 241w
Departmental forms 240-1w
Disclosure of information 241w, 324-5w
Finance 241-2w
Home computers 244w, 325w
Management techniques 262w
Publicity 325w
Telephone systems 325-6w

Data subjects 324w

Davies, Mr Ron
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 166-9, 170
Questions

Acid rain, Research 18-9w
Acid rain, Trees 17-8w, 63w
Air pollution, Research 22-3w
Environmentally sensitive areas 311w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Government grants 311w
Unemployment, Wales 37w

Day care of children
Wales 211-2w

De Lorean, John 680

Deaf
Police interrogation 121-2w
Private education 267-8w
Special schools 267-8w

Death
Buses 328w
Fairclough, Myra 159-60w
Liver diseases 200-2w
Meningitis 62-3w
M1 260w
Wallenberg, Raoul 145w
Youth training scheme 134-6w, 137-8w

Debts
Africa 272w
Developing countries 36w

Deeds of covenant
Students 287-8w

Defective housing 15w, 115w, 116w, 117w, 119w
Building societies 117w
Council housing 15w, 115w, 116w
Glasgow 189w
Government grants to local authorities 119w

Defective housing, Specific cases 189w

Defence
Technology transfer 194w

Defence contracts
International cooperation 194w
USA 194w

Defence expenditure
Armed forces pensions 141w

Defence industries employment
Armed forces strength 85w

Defence procurement
Protective clothing 257w

Defence research
Strategic defence initiative 257w

Democracy
Chile 144w, 235w

Dental amalgam 155w

Dental Auxiliaries (Amendment) Regulations 1985 (12.11.85) 464

Dental charges exemptions
Pregnant women 334-5w

Dental Estimates Board 336w

Dental services
NHS 335w
Preventive medicine 335w

Dentistry 336w

Departmental circulars
House renovation grants 25-6w

Departmental coordination
Drug abuse 231w
Northern Ireland Government 678
Overseas aid 232w

Departmental forms
Data Protection Registrar 240-1w

Deportation
Stateless persons 320w

"Deprivation in Rural Areas" 119-20w

Dept of Employment
Public appointments 423
Regional investigation teams 180w

Dept of Energy
Cash limits 12-3w

Dept of Health & Social Security local offices
Civil service manpower 330-1w
Huyton 160w
Lambeth 155-6w
Overtime 331-2w

Dept of the Environment
Amey Roadstone 17w
Cash limits 25w
Labour mobility 20w
Public expenditure 111-5w

Dept of Trade & Industry
Cash limits 46w
Overseas Development Administration 232w
Personal records 306w

Dept of Transport
Amey Roadstone 80w
Cash limits 83w
Consultants 74w
Engineers 79w

Derbyshire
Health service staff 206w
Pupil-teacher ratios 174w

Design
Management 223-4w, 226w

Design Council 224w

Developing countries
Debts 36w
Exports 143w
STABEX 234-5w

Development aid 233w, 296w
Africa 308
Agriculture 34-5w, 308, 310, 311-2
European community aid 310
Lome convention 309
Overseas Development Administration 311-2
Voluntary organisations 34w

Development Commission
Government grants 25w

Development plans 65w

Devolution
Northern Ireland Assembly 672
Northern Ireland Government 677

Dewar, Mr Donald
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 198-204, 208, 209, 210
Questions
Amphetamines, Scotland 65w
Average earnings, Scotland 65w
Drug abuse, Scotland 63w, 65w
Manufacturing industries, Scotland 63w, 66w
Public expenditure, Scotland 550-1
Service industries, Scotland 64w
Womens employment, Scotland 64w
Youth training scheme, Scotland 313-4w

DHSS local offices
Huyton 159w

Dial-a-ride 302
Greater London 75w, 302

Dickens, Mr Geoffrey
Questions
Director of Public Prosecutions, Prosecutions 307-8
Waste disposal, Polkemmet 551

Dicks, Mr Terry
Questions
British Airways, Privatisation 75w

Diplomatic immunity
Parking offences 299-301w

Diplomatic service
Contracts for services 101w

Direct labour departments
Haringey 19w

Director of Public Prosecutions
Prosecutions 307-8

Directors
The Observer 43w

Disabled Persons (Badges for Motor Vehicles) Regulations 1982 128w

Disaster relief
Africa 35-6w
Air force 309
Ethiopia 310
Overseas aid 309, 312
Technical assistance 312

Disclosure of information
Channel crossing 329w
Companies 241w
Data Protection Registrar 241w, 324-5w
Electoral register 242w
Family practitioner committees 278w
Fees & charges 324w
Greater Manchester Residuary Body 218w
Higher civil servants 100w
Medical services committees 278w
Personal records 306-7
War Cabinet 27-8w

Diseases
Poverty 417

Dismissal
Joseph, Keith 100w

Distinction certificates 267w

District health authorities
East Anglia 412
North West region (11.11.85) 401-6
Pay settlements 200w
Public appointments 412

District tax offices 315-6w
Tax assessment appeals 315-6w

Dobson, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 391
Question
Clement, Harry, Interviews 123w
Community care, NHS finance 335w
Data Protection registrar, Civil service manpower 325w
Data Protection registrar, Disclosure of information 324-5w
Data Protection registrar, Home computers 325w
Data Protection registrar, Publicity 325w
Data Protection registrar, Telephone systems 325-6w
Dept of Employment, Public appointments 423
Garner, Roy, Police informers 123w
Health service staff, Pay 335-6w
Hospital waiting lists, East Anglia 412
NHS finance 336w
Police informers, Brass Tacks 123w

Dockyard Services Bill 1985/86
1R (12.11.85) 463

Dockyards
Privatisation 305w, (12.11.85) 463

Doctors list of patients
Scotland 186w

DOE Circular 9/85 119w

Dog fighting (08.11.85) 219

Dogs (08.11.85) 219

Dormand, Mr Jack
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 348-50
Questions
Coal firing scheme, Government grants 295w
Youth unemployment, Northern region 684

Dornoch firth 188-9w
Bridges 188-9w

Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Canada) Order 1985
(11.11.85) 316

Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Finland) Order 1985 (11.11.85) 316

Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Ivory Coast) Order 1985 (11.11.85) 316

Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Norway) Order 1985 (11.11.85) 316

Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Soviet Union) Order 1985 (11.11.85) 316

Douglas, Mr Dick
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 439
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 515-7
Questions
Teachers, Scotland 187-8w, 557-8

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 70-2
Questions
Further education colleges, Educational finance 185w
High Court, Drug crimes 172w
Higher education, Scotland 312w
Teachers, Scotland 552

Dounreay
Environmental impact assessment 146w

Dover, Mr Den
Questions
Channel crossing, Upper Waiting Hall 84w
Export financing 67w

Draize test 274w

Drift nets 5-6w, 276w

Drinking
Alcoholism 72w

Drinking & driving 72w
Christmas 129w, 265w
Convictions 30w, 245w
Police equipment 244-5w
Publicity 264-5w
Road accidents 560-1
Wales 30w

Driving
Medical examinations 174-5w

Driving licences
Buses 263-4w
Northern Ireland 248w

Driving offences 245w, 266w
Buses 263w
Motorcycles 265-6w

Driving tests
Administrative delays 70w, 327-8w
Buses 263w
Hampshire 327-8w

Drug abuse 100w
Departmental coordination 231w
Medical treatments 63w
Scotland 63w, 65w, 187w
Young people 65w
Youth unemployment 683

Drug advisory committees 148w

Drug crimes
Criminal investigation 184w
Extradition 123w
High Court 172w
Prison sentences 32w
Prisoners 236w
Prosecutions 172w, 307, 308
Scotland 65w, 172w
Strathclyde 184w
Trials 172w
United Nations 123w

Drug industry
Public appointments 414

Drugs
Prescriptions 413
Prisoners 177-8w
Smuggling 307

du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 729-35

Dubs, Mr Alfred
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks, Northern Ireland 197w
Central America, Bilateral aid 36w
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 245w
Hospital waiting lists, Greater London 148-9w
Immigrants, Bangladesh 179w
Immigration appeals, Administrative delays 179w
Immigration controls 239-40w
Juries, 242w
Legal aid, Administrative delays 26w
Prison visitors, Annual reports 323w
Prisoners mail, Censorship 323w
Temporary immigrants, Bangladesh 179w
Temporary immigrants, Repatriation 178w
Wandsworth Prison, Prison employment 320-1w
Wandsworth Prison, Prisoners exercise 321w
Wandsworth Prison, Sanitation 319-20w

Duffy, Mr A E P
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 454
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 629-30

Dundee
Company liquidations 254w
Employment schemes 253-4w
Housing finance 190w
Job creation schemes 253-4w
Redundancy 254w
Scottish Urban Programme 550
Unemployment 253-4w
Vacancies 253-4w
Youth unemployment 252-3w, 254w

Dundee District Council 190w

Dunn, Mr Bob, *Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science*
Questions
International Youth Year, Government grants 48w
Local education authorities, parents rights 108w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Derbyshire 174w
School buildings, Construction 173-4w
School choice, Appeals 107w
School choice, Parents rights 294w
Special schools, Deaf 267-8w

Dunston Hill Hospital 199w
Fire prevention 199w

Durham Prison 177w

Duty solicitors 27w

Dwarf throwing 30w

Dykes, Mr Hugh
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 731, 734, 737, 746
Road safety (15.11.85) 818
Questions
Dial-a-ride, Greater London 302
Israel, Arms trade 144w

Early retirement
Local government staff 21w

Easdale Island Shipping Line (12.11.85) 464

East Anglia
District health authorities 412
Hospital waiting lists 412
Insolvency 42-3w

East London river crossing 83w, 328w
Ministers domestic visits 328w

East Timor
Indonesia 60w

East West relations 100w
Foreign policy 196w

Eastham, Mr Ken
Questions
Business statement 116
M66, Public inquiries 79-80w

EC accession
European Regional Development Fund 202-3w

EC action
Employment 182-3w
Food surpluses 311-2w
Noise control 182-3w
Parental leave 10w
STABEX 234-5w
Unit trusts 193w
Wallenberg, Raoul 236w

EC budget 271-2w, (14.11.85) 712-78
Agriculture 311-2w
European Regional Development Fund 202-3w
Intervention stocks 198w, 276w
UK contributions 272w

EC Cons Doc 5874/85 (14.11.85) 712-78

EC Cons Doc 6378/85 (14.11.85) 712-78

EC Cons Doc 6379/85 (14.11.85) 712-78

EC contingency reserve 34w

EC Development Council 183-4w

EC Draft 11118/83 10w

EC Draft 8479/85 (14.11.85) 712-78

EC external relations
Strategic defence initiative 197w

EC grants & loans
Agriculture 186w
Regional aid 24w

EC internal trade
Agricultural products 47-8w
Fraud 47-8w
Greece 192w

EC Poverty Programme 202-6w

EC reform 198w

EC Steel Council 46-7w

EC Transport Council
Shipping 75w

Economic policy
Queen's speech (13.11.85) 575-660

Economic recession
Standard of living 419

Economic situation 125-6w, (12.11.85) 431-43
Scottish Trades Union Congress 549-50

Edinburgh
Multiple occupation 420

Edinburgh Western Relief Road (11.11.85) 295

Education
Childrens rights 110w
Queen's speech (11.11.85) 318-400w
Young offenders 121w
Youth custody 110w, 121w

Education Act 1981 108w

Education of children at home 108w
Child benefit 149w

Educational finance 102-6w
Further education colleges 185w
Music education 173w
Public expenditure 425-6

Educational Institute of Scotland
Industrial arbitration 557

Educational standards
Science education 294-5w

Educational finance
Child care 9-10w

Edwards, Rt Hon Nicholas, *Secretary of State for Wales*
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Wales 215w
European Regional Development Fund, Wales 38w

Manufacturing industries, Wales 211-2w
Planning appeals, Wales 293-4w
Unemployment, Wales 37w
Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education 11-2w

***Eggar, Mr Tim** Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs*
Debates etc
Czechoslovakia, Compensation (13.11.85) 665-8
Questions
Afghanistan, Foreign policy 58w
Anglo-Irish talks, Northern Ireland 197w
British Council, Government grants 197w
Chile, Arms exports 235w, 236w
Chile, Democracy 144w, 235w
Czechoslovakia Compensation Fund, Administrative delays 298w
Diplomatic immunity, Parking offences 299-301w
Diplomatic staff 142-3w
Entry clearances, Administrative delays 196w
European Convention on Human Rights 234w
European Year of Gardens 297w
Falkland Islands, Expenditure 197w
Falkland Islands, Television 58w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Cash limits 8w
Gibraltar, Spain 57w
India, Immigration applications 60w
Irish Sailors & Soldiers Land Trust 144w
Lembach, Pedro 143w
Spain 57w
Uganda, Compensation 196-7w
United Nations Association, Government grants 297w

Elderly
Board & lodging charges 91-2w
Gas safety 225-6w
Personal social services 147w
Primary health care 215w

Elections
Northern Ireland Assembly 671, 672
Thamesmead 424

Electoral register
Disclosure of information 242w

Electorate 282-4w

Electricity
Health & Safety Executive 179-80w

Electronic equipment
Manufactured imports 41-2w
USA 41-2w

Elenas, Costas 28w
Immunity from prosecution 28w

Elevated sections of motorways
Titford viaduct 329w

Emergency services 282w
Pharmacists 282w

Emery, Sir Peter
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 124

Employment 132-4w, 181w
EC action 182-3w
London Docklands Development Corporation 309w

Employment by sector 50-2w

Employment discrimination
Northern Ireland 127w

Employment level
Black economy 131w
Statistics 131w

Employment opportunities 51w
Charities 226-7w
Hospital consultants 86-8w
Scotland 550
Small businesses 130w, 426

Employment schemes
Dundee 253-4w
Ministerial statements (12.11.85) 444-60
Queen's speech (12.11.85) 465-534

Employment Subsidies Act 1978 (Renewal) (Great Britain) Order 1985 (12.11.85) 464

Empty housing 17w

Endless holding 160w

Energy conservation
Great Grimsby 226w

Energy efficiency 226w
Public buildings 226w

Energy technology support unit 22-3w

Engineers
Dept of Transport 79w

English Industrial Estates Corporation
Government grants 192w
Public sector assets 305w

Entry clearances
Administrative delays 196w

Environmental impact assessment 128w, 146w
Channel crossing 128w
Dounreay 146w

Environmentally sensitive areas 311w
Government grants 311w

Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland 246w
Government grants 246w

Established use certificates 16-7w

Ethiopia
Disaster relief 310
Overseas aid 310

Ethnic groups
Youth training scheme 133w

Ethnic minorities
Urban programme 166w

EUREKA 191w, 225w
Finance 48w

Europa House 295w

Europe
Air travel 76w

European Commission
Strategic defence initiative 291w

European Communities
Expenditure 271-2w

EC aid
Central America 145-6w
Development aid 310
Lome convention 309

EC law
Business 138w
Meat 164w

European Convention on Human Rights 234w, 684-5

European Cup Final 291w

European monetary system 316w

European Regional Development Fund 24w
EC budget 202-3w
EC accession 202-3w
Wales 38w

European Road Safety Year 175w
UK contributions 175w

European Security Conference
USSR 235w

European Year of Gardens 297w

Evans, Mr John
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 460
Questions
Truck Acts 181-2w

Evennett, Mr David
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 345, 380-3
Questions
Canary Wharf, Public inquiries 120w
Council housing, Thamesmead 424
Institute of Zoology 169-70w
Overseas aid, Overseas trade 35w

Evidence
Procurators fiscal 561-2
Trials 561-2

Ewing, Mr Harry
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 451-2
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 645, 650
Questions
Hospitals, Crown Immunity 559
Prison overcrowding, Scotland 548
Teachers, Scotland 554

Examinations
Industrial disputes 187-8w, 554

Exchange rates
Exchange control 316-7w

Exhibitions
Channel crossing 326w

Explosions
Abbeystead pumping station 423
Gas accidents 52w

Export controls
USA 233w

Export financing 67w

Exports
COCOM 298w
Developing countries 143w
Plutonium 55w, 59w

External financing limits
British Gas Corporation 55w

Extradition
Belgium 291w
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 177w
Drug crimes 123w
Northern Ireland Government 678-9

"Fabric of the Nation" 304

Factory closures
British Steel Corporation 184w
Merseyside 227w

Fairbairn, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 704
Legal profession, Scotland (13.11.85) 563
Questions
Business statement 696
Evidence, Trials 562
Rate rebates, Scotland 555
Trustee savings banks, Privatisation 565

Fairclough, Myra 159-60w
Death 159-60w

Falkland Islands
Expenditure 197w
Television 58w
War Cabinet 27-8w

Family doctors
Contraceptives 281w
Fees & charges 281w
Pay systems 284w
Retirement age 284w

"Family Expenditure Survey, 1983" 159w, 334w

Family planning clinics
Young people 336w

Family practitioner committees
Disclosure of information 278w

Farm capital grants scheme 555-6
Land drainage 556
Scotland 555-6

Farmers
Scotland 546

Farr, Sir John
Questions
Business statement 689

Trustee savings banks, Privatisation 566

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Questions
Hospital nurses 147w

Faulds, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Temporary immigrants (11.11.85) 314
Questions
Business statement 693
Transport infrastructure, Public expenditure 304

Favell, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 185
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 471
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 320, 331-2, 359, 361-2
Questions
Business statement 118, 695
Europa House 295w
Limited list prescribing 414
Manchester Airport, Management 72w
Youth employment, Board & lodging charges 420

Fees & charges
Agricultural services 6-8w
Club licensing 33w
Disclosure of information 324w
Family doctors 281w
Social security recipients 419

Fenner, Mrs Peggy, *Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*
Questions
Agricultural land, Land use 56w
Crop spraying, Urban areas 56-7w
Environmentally sensitive areas 311w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Government grants 311w
Food colourings 164w
Food & Environment Protection Act 1985 273w
Meat, Growth promoting hormones 164w
Pesticides, Animal experiments 274w
Pesticides, Health hazards 273w
Pesticides, Stubble burning 273w
Veterinary services, Lasswade 197-8w
Working Party on Pesticide Residues 163w
Working Party on Pesticide Residues Report, 1977/81 163w

Field, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 320, 329
Questions
Children in care, Adoption 279w
Households, Low income 334w
Redundancy, Merseyside 227w, 228w
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 420
Unemployment, Birkenhead 52-4w

Fields, Mr Terry
Questions
Police, Merseyside 30w

Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Questions
Business statement 115
Hospitals, Construction 285-6w
Medical treatments, Greater London 286w

Fire prevention
Aviation fuels 174w
Dunstan Hill Hospital 199w
Hospitals 156w

Fish conservation
Northern Ireland 245w
Salmon 276w

Fisher, Mr Mark
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 703
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 441
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 394

Fishery protection 277-8w

Fixed penalties
Road traffic offences 1w

Flannery, Mr Martin
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 442
Flannery, Martin, Members attendance (12.11.85) 429, 461-2
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 362
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 676

Flather, Shreela 33-4w
Commission for Racial Equality 33-4w

Flats
Private sector housing 215-6w, 220w

Flats Management Committee of Inquiry 220w

Fletcher, Mr Alex,
Questions
Multiple occupation, Edinburgh 420
Trustee savings banks, Privatisation 564

Foetal tissue 28w, 43-4w, 91w, 198w, 208w
Celaton Laboratory Research 91w
Codes of practice 91w
Cosmetics industry 43-4w, 198w
Council of Europe 198w
Jacobson Chemicals 91w
Trade 91w, 208w

Food
Pesticide residues 163w
Sugar beet 275w

Food aid from EC 310, (14.11.85) 712-78
Africa 34w, 183-4w

Food aid from UK 296w

Food colourings 164w

Food hygiene
Hospital catering 415, 416, 426

Food surpluses
EC action 311-2w

"Food Surveillance Paper, 9" 163w

Food & Environment Protection Act 1985 273w

Fookes, Miss Janet
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 453

Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 440
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 449

Football
Broadcasting 44-5w
Hooliganism 291w

Football League 44-5w

Footpaths 327w

Foreign Compensation (Czechoslovakia) Order 1982 (13.11.85) 662-8

Foreign policy
Afghanistan 58w
East West relations 196w
Libyan Arab Republic 57w
Queen's speech (08.11.85) 220-86
Singapore 58w

Foreign relations
Republic of Ireland 425
Sudan 34w

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Cash limits 8w

Forestry (Modification of Felling Restrictions) Regulations 1985 (11.11.85) 316

Forman, Mr Nigel
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 441
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 465, 466

Forsyth, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 334, 365-8
Questions
Agriculture, Scotland 185w
Building societies, Legislation 3-4w
Child benefit, Education of children at home 149w
Hospitals, Crown Immunity 559
Severe weather payments, Scotland 546

Forsythe, Mr Clifford
Questions
Cable television, Northern Ireland 322w
Northern Ireland Government, Departmental coordination 678

Forth, Mr Eric
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 712, 715
Questions
Social security reviews 419

Foulkes, Mr George
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 716, 718, 737, 738, 739, 761, 766, 768-74
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 79
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 477, 479
Questions
Central America, EC aid 145-6w
Chile, Arms exports 235w, 236w
Chile, Democracy 235w
Commodity agreements 143w
EC Poverty Programme 202-6w
EC reform 198w
Employment, EC action 182-3w
Employment by sector 50-2w
European Regional Development Fund, EC accession 202-3w
Falkland Islands, Television 58w
Lembach, Pedro 143w
Scotland, Teachers 556-7
Social security reviews 152w
STABEX, Developing countries 234-5w
STABEX, Lome convention 145w
Tape recorded evidence, Scotland 173w
Unit trusts, EC action 193w
USA, UNESCO 183w

Fowler, Rt Hon Norman, *Secretary of State for Social Services*
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 318-26, 333
Questions
Limited list prescribing 413, 414
Limited list prescribing, Appeals 413
Limited list prescribing, Complaints 414
Limited list prescribing, Oral mucolytics 413
National insurance contributions 161-3w
NHS finance 160-1w
Occupational pensions, Investment 418
Opportunities for volunteering scheme 418-9
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 418
Social security reviews 418
Social security reviews, Social Fund 419
State earnings related pension scheme, Womens employment 418

Frankland Prison 324w
Building alterations 324w

Franks, Mr Cecil
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 708
Questions
British Rail, Railway catering 80w
Prosecutions, Personal records 306-7

Fraser, Mr John
Questions
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Lambeth 155-6w

Groce, Cherry, Complaints against police 243w

Fraser, Mr Peter, *Solicitor-General for Scotland*
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 560
Crown Immunity, Scotland 559
Drug crimes, Scotland 172w
Evidence, Trials 562
High Court, Drug crimes 172w
Hospitals, Crown Immunity 559
Peterhead Prison, Prison visits 223w
Procurators fiscal, Evidence 561-2
Prosecutions, Scotland 558-9
Road accidents, Drinking & driving 560-1
Tape recorded evidence, Scotland 173w
Transient people, Scotland 172w
Unruly children, Scotland 86 8-10w
Warrant sales, Scotland 172w

Fraud
City of London 305-6
EC internal trade 47-8w
Prosecutions 305-6

Freedom of expression 423

Freeman, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Czechoslovakia, Compensation (13.11.85) 662-4
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 454
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 328
Questions
Africa, Disaster relief 35-6w
Resource Allocation Working Party, Statistics 417

Freight transport 69w

Freud, Mr Clement
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 701
Prime Ministers question time point of order (14.11.85) 686
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 343-6
Questions
Business statement 693-4
CERN 109-10w
CERN, Government grants 109w
Education, Youth custody 110w
High Energy Particle Physics Review Group 110w
Limited list prescribing 283w
Limited list prescribing, Appeals 283w
Local education authorities, Parents rights 108w
Nuclear physics 109w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Open University 100w
Privatisation, Shares 225w
Rights of way 220w
Science & Technology research, Research finance 108-10w
Sugar beet, Production quotas 274-5w
Unemployment 231w
Young offenders, Education 121w

Fry, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Road safety (15.11.85) 798, 821-5

Fuel bills 93w

Further education 24w

Further education colleges 185w
Education finance 185w

Future
Higher education 267w

Gale, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 163-6

Galley, Mr Roy
Questions
Health visitors, Training 280w
Toxocara canis, Children 334w

Gambia
Overseas aid 36w

Gardens 297w

Gardiner, Mr George
Questions
Summertime 243w

Gardiner, J 335w
Members correspondence 335w

Garner, Roy 123w, 178w
"Brass Tacks" 123w
Costs 178w
Police informers 123w
Television programmes 178w

Garrett, Mr Ted
Debates etc
Road safety (15.11.85) 791, 825-7

Gartcosh
British Steel Corporation 184w
Ravenscraig Steelworks 550

Gartcosh Steelworks
Public petitions (12.11.85) 535

Gas accidents
Explosions 52w

Gas levy
British Gas Corporation 55w, 56w

Gas reserves
Income 126w

Gas safety
Elderly 225-6w
Handicapped 225-6w

Gas tariffs
Price increases 296w

Gateshead Health Authority
Geriatrics 199w

General Certificate of Secondary Education 267w
Teacher training 106-7w, 268-9w

General consents 120w

Geneva
International conferences 196w

Geriatric patients
Wales 215w

Geriatrics
Gateshead Health Authority 199w
Hospital beds 212-6w
Wales 212-6w

Gibraltar 57w
Spain 57w

Gilbert, Rt Hon John
Debates etc
Road safety (15.11.85) 830-3

Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 489-91

Glasgow
Defective housing 189w
Legionnaires disease 415-6

Glasgow eastern area renewal 189w

Glyn, Dr Alan
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 49-51
Questions
Business statement 696-7
General Certificate of Secondary Education, Teacher training 268-9w

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 752-3
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 67, 69
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 160-3, 207
Unemployment, Greenock & Port Glasgow (08.11.85) 287-90, 292
Questions
Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970 153w
Procurators fiscal, Evidence 561-2
Public sector housing, Government grants 189w

Golding, Mr John
Questions
Industrial health & safety, Computer terminals 301w

Goodhart, Sir Philip
Debates etc
Road safety (15.11.85) 814-7

Goodlad, Mr Alastair, *Under-Secretary of State for Energy*
Questions
Europa House 295w
Magnox reactors, Plutonium 55w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Costs 55w
Plutonium, Exports 55w

Gorbachev, Mikhail 100w, 196w

Government assistance
Agriculture 184-5w

Government assistance to industry
Apprentices 130w
Harland & Wolff 10w
North West region 426-8

Government Communications Headquarters
Joint speech research unit 84w
Kane, Jock 99-101w

Government contracts
Amey Roadstone 61w

Government departments
Computer privacy 306w

Government grants
Arts Council 269-70w
British Council 197w
CERN 109w
Charities 226-7w
Coal firing scheme 295w
Development Commission 25w
English Industrial Estates Corporation 192w
Environmentally sensitive areas 311w
Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland 246w
House purchase 117w
Information technology centres 224w
Inner city areas 684
International Youth Year 48w
Open University 49w
Overseas trade 309-11
Public sector housing 189w
Sports Council 222-3w
Ulster Agriculture Organisation Society 245-6w
United Nations Association 297w

Government grants to local authorities 29w
Chinese community 29-30w
Defective housing 119w
Rate support grants 554-5

Government loans
Northern Ireland (07.11.85) 118-9

Government shareholding
Cable & Wireless 4w

Gow, Mr Ian, *Minister of State at the Treasury*
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 731, 747, 774-8
Questions
EC budget, UK contributions 272w
European Communities, Expenditure 271-2w
VAT, British Legion poppies 270w
VAT, Companies 195w
VAT, Human organs 66-7w, 316w

Grant, Sir Anthony
Questions
Driving, Medical examinations 174-5w
Driving offences 266w
Police, Cambridgeshire 121w

Great Grimsby 117w, 118w, 219-20w, 305w
Bankruptcy 305w

Company liquidations 305w
Council house sales 118w
Council housing 117w
Energy conservation 226w
House purchase 118w
Housing construction 117w
Housing investment programme 219-20w
Housing stock 118w

Greater Glasgow Health Board 187w
NHS finance 187w

Greater London
Acute beds 286w
Air traffic 76w
Charitable trusts 25w
Dial-a-ride 75w, 302
Hospital waiting lists 148-9w
Local government reform 262w
Lorries 78w
Medical treatments 286w
Mobility of disabled 71w, 261w, 302-3
Museums & galleries (07.11.85) 119
Prisons 324w
Remand in custody 171w
Road traffic control 81w
Road works 262-3w
Roads 70w
Taxicards 261w, 302-3
Wages councils 179w
Waste disposal 221w

Greater London Council
Local government reform 119w
Local government staff 22w
Lorries 74-5w
Taxicards 71w

Greater Manchester
Travel concessions 297
Youth training scheme 230w

Greater Manchester Residuary Body 218w
Disclosure of information 218w
Public appointments 218w

Greece
EC internal trade 192w
Import controls 192w
Profits 192w

Greenock
Unemployment (08.11.85) 287-94

Greenway, Mr Harry
Debates etc
Dog fighting (08.11.85) 219
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 78-81
Questions
Armed forces pensions, Bombings 141-2w
British Rail, Railway timetables 176w
Business statement 695
Contraceptives, Young people 414
Food aid from UK 296w
Juries 124w
School meals, Child care 9-10w
Travel concessions, Transport Act 1985 295-6

Gregory, Mr Conal
Debates etc
Road safety (15.11.85) 791, 801-4
Questions
Buses, Tachographs 75w
Development Commission, Government grants 25w
Railway travel, Bicycles 301
Trade union rule books 49-50w

Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 134, 135, 188
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 680
A11, Road traffic 127w
Lorries, A11 326w
Operation Julie, Prison sentences 32w
Police, Uniforms 29w

Grocery trade
Market share 190-1w

Groce, Cherry 243w, 306
Complaints against police 243w

Ground, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 157-60

Growth promoting hormones 164w
Health hazards 164w
Meat 164w

Grylls, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 449-50
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 589, 609
Questions
Unitary taxation 124w

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn, *Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries & Food*
Questions
EC budget, Agriculture 311-2w
EC budget, Intervention stocks 276w
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 276-7w
Intervention stocks, EC budget 276w
Milk, Production quotas 163w
Salmon, North East coast drift fishery 276w
Salmon, Poaching 5-6w
Sugar beet, Production quotas 274-5w
Wheat, Imports 164w

Gynaecology
Norwich 412

Hamilton, Mr James
Debates etc
Oral questions, Scottish Office (13.11.85) 563
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 48
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 635
Questions
Scottish Trades Union Congress 187w

Hamilton, Mr Neil
Questions
Audio equipment, Taxation 44w
The Observer, Directors 43w
The Observer, Takeovers 43-4w

Hamilton, Mr Willie W
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 604-8
Questions
EC budget, Intervention stocks 198w
Cervical cancer, Screening 154w
Channel crossing 69w
Road accidents, Drinking & driving 560-1
Teachers, Scotland 551-2

Hampshire
Community care 334w
Company liquidations 306w
Driving tests 327-8w
Psychogeriatrics 334w

Hampton
St Marys Hospital 421

Hancock, Mr Michael
Questions
Asbestos, Safety standards 138w
Buses, Motorways 176w
Community care, Hampshire 334w
Company liquidations, Hampshire 306w
Driving tests, Administrative delays 327-8w
Fairclough, Myra, Death 159-60w
Housing investment programmes, Portsmouth 309w
Housing starts, Portsmouth 309w
Psychogeriatrics, Hampshire 334w
Road accidents, Buses 328w
Road safety, Buses 328w
Teacher training 294w
Youth unemployment, Portsmouth 302w

Handicapped
Cinemas 31w, 122w
Concessionary fares 82w
Gas safety 225-6w

Handicapped children
Residential care of children 157-8w

Handicapped drivers
Orange badge scheme 128w
Parking 262w, 281w

Handicapped workers 138-9w
Manpower 180w
Occupational pensions 419-20
Unemployment 227w
Youth training scheme 190w

Hannam, Mr John
Questions
Air travel, Europe 76w

Haringey
Direct labour departments 19w

Harland & Wolff 10w
Government assistance to industry 10w

Harman, Ms Harriet
Questions
Public appointments, Security vetting 100-1w

Harris, Mr David
Debates etc
Prime Ministers question time point of order (14.11.85) 686
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 44-6
Questions
Business statement 692

Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Questions
M1, Road signs 261w

Haselhurst, Mr Alan
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 350, 356-9
Questions
Local government reform, Lea Valley Regional Park Authority 222w

Hatfield
A1 M 330w

Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 434, 442
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 575-83, 587, 591

Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael, *Attorney-General*
Questions
Football, Hooliganism 291w
Juries, Northern Ireland 293w
Magistrates, Wales 291-3w

Hayes, Mr Jerry
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 579
Questions
Skoal Bandits 200w

Hayes bypass 262-3w

Hayhoe, Mr Barney, *Minister of State for Health*
Questions
Abortion 287w
Aids 149w
Aids, Blood transfusions 147-8w, 198-9w
Aids, Research 149w
Blood plasma 422
Cervical cancer, Screening 154w
Community care, Hampshire 334w
Community care, NHS finance 335w
Community dental services 335w
Community nurses 148w
Community nurses, Manpower 87w
Contraceptives, Family doctors 281w
Contraceptives, Young people 414-5
Crown immunity, Hospitals 416
Dental amalgam 155w
Dental charges exemptions, Pregnant women 334-5w
Dental services, NHS 335w

Dentistry 336w
District health authorities, Pay settlements 200w
Fairclough, Myra, Death 159-60w
Family doctors, Pay systems 284w
Family doctors, Retirement age 284w
Family practitioner committees, Disclosure of information 278w
Foetal tissue, Celaton Laboratory Research 91w
Foetal tissue, Codes of practice 91w
Foetal tissue, Cosmetics industry 198w
Foetal tissue, Trade 91w, 208w
Handicapped children, Residential care of children 157-8w
Health insurance 280w
Health service staff, Derbyshire 206w
Health service staff, Labour costs 331-3w
Health service staff, Pay 335-6w
Health services, Expenditure 94w
Health visitors, Training 280w
Heart diseases, Upper Waiting Hall 282w
Hospital catering, Food hygiene 415, 416
Hospital consultants, Employment opportunities 86-8w
Hospital nurses 147w
Hospitals, Crown immunity 147w
Human embryo experiments, Legislation 155w
Legionnaires disease, Glasgow 416
Legionnaires disease, Stafford 415-6
Limited list prescribing 152w, 283w
Limited list prescribing, Appeals 152w, 283w
Local authorities, Personal social services 152w
Medical ethics, Public appointments 91w
NHS, Administrative costs 331w
NHS, Contracts for services 154w, 160w
NHS, Crown immunity 150w
NHS, Racial discrimination 279w
NHS complaints, North West region 278w
NHS finance 336w
North West Thames Regional Health Authority, Expenditure 154w
Nurses, Housing 87w
Pelvic diseases, Medical research 288-90w
Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee 286w
Pharmacists, Hospitals 202w, 282w
Pharmacists, Recruitment 158w
Prescription drugs 421-2
Private hospitals, Abortion 206-7w
Resource Allocation Working Party, Statistics 417
Social Services Select Committee on Mental Health Community Care 150w
Stanley Royd Hospital, Salmonella 93w
Unemployment, Health 417
Young people, Contraception 336w
Young people, Contraceptives 150w

Haynes, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 383-5
Questions
Roads, Repairs & maintenance 300-1

Hayward, Mr Rob
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 458-9
Questions
Pay deductions 10w

Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 225, 228-36, 283

Health
Unemployment 417

Health hazards
Growth promoting hormones 164w
Pesticides 273w

Health insurance 280w

Health service staff
Derbyshire 206w
Labour costs 331-3w
Northern Ireland 248-50w
Pay 335-6w
Race relations 279w
Scotland 312-4w
Wales 210-2w

Health services
Expenditure 94w
Northern Ireland 669
Northern Ireland Government 669-70
Public expenditure 160-1w

Health services finances
Western health & social services board 669

Health visitors
Training 280w

Health & Safety Executive
Asbestos 85w
Electricity 179-80w
Manpower 179-80w
Prisons 176w

Heart diseases
Upper Waiting Hall 282w

Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 599-604

Heathcoat-Amory, Mr David
Questions
Abortion 287w
Development aid, Agriculture 35w
Ministry of Defence, Cash limits 85w
Prescription drugs 421-2

Heathrow
Perry Oaks Sludge Works 70w

Heddle, Mr John
Debates etc
Public telephones (15.11.85) 849-50
Questions
Agricultural land, Land use 56w
Auctions 42w
Building inspectors 26w
Council housing, Defective housing 115w
Dangerous mental patients, Special hospitals 287w
Dept of the Environment, Public expenditure 111-5w
Established use certificates 16-7w
Industrial buildings 191w
Planning appeals 16w
School choice, Parents rights 294w
Science & Technology research, Questionnaires 42w
Work permits, Theodorou, Marina 326w

Heffer, Mr Eric S
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 704
EC budget (14.11.85) 713, 717
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 584, 619-21, 647
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 124
Questions
Business statement 690

Henderson, Mr Barry
Questions
Agricultural advisory services, Scotland 254-6w
Doctors list of patients, Scotland 186w
Employment opportunities, Scotland 550
Scotland, Teachers 557
United Nations Association, Government grants 297w

Henry Ansbacher 124w
Banks 124w

Hertfordshire County Council 127w

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael, *Secretary of State for Defence*
Debates etc
Armed Forces Bill 1985/86, 1R (07.11.85) 119
Dockyard Services Bill, 1R (12.11.85) 463
Local Government Bill 1985/86, 1R (07.11.85) 119

Hickmet, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 456
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 197-8
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 484

Higgins, Mr Terence
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 436
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 636-8
Road safety (15.11.85) 791, 808-10, 812-3, 841
Questions
Business statement 113-4
Motorways, Speed limits 297-8

High Court
Drug crimes 172w

High Energy Particle Physics Review Group 109w, 110w

High technology 233w
USA 233w

Higher civil servants
Disclosure of information 100w

Higher education
Future 267w
Scotland 312w
Wales 11-2w

"Higher Education Consultation Paper" 267w

Highlands of Scotland
Agriculture 185w

Hill livestock allowances
Scotland 547

Hind, Mr Kenneth
Questions
Channel crossing 69w

Hirst, Mr Michael
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 560
Insolvency Act 1985 191-2w
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 190w
Medical Research Council, Expenditure 107w
Rate rebates, Scotland 555
Salmon, Scotland 1w
Teachers, Scotland 552-3

Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission 20w, 119w
Civil service manpower 20w
Local government staff 119w

Hogg, Mr Douglas
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 153
Sedgemore, Brian, Members conduct (11.11.85) 313
Questions
Juries 306

Holiday leave
Unemployment 228w

Holt, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 455

Home care services
Local government social services 157w

Home computers
Data Protection Registrar 244w, 325w

Home helps 157w

"Home Improvement Consultation Paper" 116w, 166w, 308w
Housing policy 116w

Home Office
Broadcasting controls 178w
Queen's speech (07.11.85) 121-210

Home Office Immigration & Nationality Department 319w
Civil service manpower 319w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Questions
Agricultural research, Scotland 188w
Board & lodging charges, Lothian 150w
Invalidity benefits, Social security recipients 200w
Non-contributory invalidity pension, Social security recipients 157w
Severe weather payments, Scotland 547

Homelessness
Bed & breakfast accommodation 16w
Brent 16w

Hong Kong
Ministers visits abroad 57-8w

Hooliganism
Football 291w

Hordern, Sir Peter
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 437

Hospital admissions
Peterhead Prison 252w
Prisoners 252w
Psychogeriatrics 334w

Hospital beds
Geriatrics 212-6w
NHS 92w
Transplant surgery 201-2w

Hospital catering
Food hygiene 415, 416, 426
Prosecutions 559

Hospital consultants
Employment opportunities 86-8w

Hospital discharges

Hospital nurses 147w

Hospital radio 281w

Hospital waiting lists
East Anglia 412
Greater London 148-9w
Manchester 283w
Orthopaedics 89-91w
Peterborough 412
Transplant surgery 201-2w

Hospitals 202w
Armed forces casualties 93w
Civil defence 93w
Construction 201w, 285-6w
Crown immunity 147w, 415, 416, 426, 559
Fire prevention 156w
NHS finance 421
North West region 201w, 202w
Patients 279w
Pharmacists 202w, 282w
Radio 281w
Transplant surgery 200-2w

Hounslow Engineering Group Training Association 120w
Local government expenditure 120w

House of Commons debates
Speakers rulings & statements (06.11.85) 6, (11.11.85) 317, (12.11.85) 465

House of Commons division of time
Private members time (07.11.85) 120

House of Commons select committees (12.11.85) 401

House of Commons sessional orders (06.11.85) 1-2

House of Commons staff
Negative vetting 66w
Official secrets 101w
Security vetting 66w

House of Commons standing committees (12.11.85) 409

House of Commons times of sittings (12.11.85) 409

House purchase
Government grants 117w
Great Grimsby 118w

House Purchase Assistance Scheme 117w

House renovation grants
Departmental circulars 25-6w

Households
Low income 334w

Housing
Nurses 87w
Public expenditure 61w
Scotland 61w, (14.11.85) 711

Housing Act 1964 308w
Control orders 308w

Housing benefits
Costs 411
Occupational pensions 410-11
Pensioners 148w
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 410
Social security benefits reductions 410-11
Social security claims 159w

Housing capital allocations 16w
Brent 16w

Housing construction
Great Grimsby 117w
Statistics 119w

Housing Corporation
Brent 15-6w

Housing Defects Act 1984 117w, 119w

Housing finance
Dundee 190w

Housing improvement 116w, 166w

Housing investment programme
Great Grimsby 219-20w
Portsmouth 309w

Housing policy
"Home Improvement Consultation Paper" 116w

Housing standards
Council housing 15w
Housing stock 170w

Housing starts 170w
Liverpool 119w
Portsmouth 309w

Housing stock
Great Grimsby 118w
Housing standards 170w

Housing (Scotland) Bill 1985/86
1R (14.11.85) 711

Howard, Mr Michael *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry*
Debates etc
Matthew Brown, Ministerial statements (13.11.85) 569-73
Questions
Auctions 42w
Bankruptcy, Great Grimsby 305w
Broadcasting, Football 44-5w
Charities, Christmas cards 305w
Chicago Pacific, Takeovers 194w
Citizens Advice Bureaux, Finance 305w
Company liquidations, Hampshire 306w
Cosmetics industry, Foetal tissue 43-4w
Insolvency Act 1985 191-2w
Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, Mergers 45w
Matthew Brown, Takeovers 194w
The Observer, Directors 43w
The Observer, Takeovers 43-4w
Unit trusts, EC action 193w

Howarth, Mr Gerald
Debates
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 581
Questions
NHS, Contracts for services 154w
Perry Oaks Sludge Works, Heathrow 70w

Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 220-8

Howell, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 438

Howell, Mr Ralph
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 324
Questions
Availability for work, Social security benefits disqualification 229w
Child benefit, Expenditure 283-4w
Community nurses, Manpower 87w
Hospital consultants, Employment opportunities 86-8w
Unemployment, Handicapped workers 227w
Unemployment, Holiday leave 228w
Unemployment, Redundancy 227w
Unemployment, Single women 229w
Unemployment, Students 228w
Unemployment benefits, Age 227-8w

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Questions
Business statement 696-7
Electronic equipment, USA 41-2w
Health service staff, Northern Ireland 248-50w
Health service staff, Scotland 312-4w
Health service staff, Wales 210-2w
NHS, Racial discrimination 279w

Hughes, Mr Mark
Questions
Frankland Prison, Building alterations 324w

Hughes, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 86-8
Questions
British Rail Engineering 72-3w
Bus crews, Pay 299
Channel crossing, Disclosure of information 329w

Hughes, Mr Roy
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 51-2
Questions
Christmas bonus 149w
Severn bridge, Repairs & maintenance 69-70w

Hughes, Mr Sean
Questions
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Huyton 160w
DHSS local offices, Huyton 159w

Hughes, Mr Simon
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 59
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 125, 152, 186-91
Questions
Social security benefits, Social security reviews 151w

Human embryo experiments 155w
Legislation 155w

Human growth hormones 66-7w

Human organs 28w, 43-4w, 66-7w, 91w, 158-9w, 198w, 316w
VAT 66-7w, 316w

Human rights
Chile 235w
Indonesia 58w
USSR 235w

Human Tissue Act 1961 91w

Hume, Mr John

Questions
Youth training scheme, Northern Ireland 93-4w

Hunt, Mr David, *Under-Secretary of State for Energy*
Debates etc
Darfield Main colliery (12.11.85) 538-43
Questions
Coal firing scheme, Government grants 295w
Energy efficiency, Public buildings 226w

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 146, 176-8, 184
Questions
Dentistry 336w

Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas, *Secretary of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 121-30, 133, 134, 138
Questions
Groce, Cherry, Complaints against police 243w
Law enforcement 243w
Telephone tapping, Sheffield 324w
Transport Act 1982, Road traffic offences 1w

Huyton
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 160w
DHSS local offices 159w
Social security benefits 160w

Hybrid bills (12.11.85) 407-8

Hyde Park 141-2w

Illegal immigrants
Bangladesh 179w

Immigrants
Bangladesh 179w

Immigrants sponsors 31-2w

Immigration appeals
Administrative delays 179w

Immigration applications
India 60w
Mehta, Shailesh 60w

Immigration controls 239-40w
Members 31-2w
Pavitt, Laurie 31-2w

Immigration officers 239-40w
Manpower 239-40w

Immigration rules
Members 121w
Refugees 319w

Immunity from prosecution
Civil servants 2-3w
Elenas, Costas 28w

Import controls
Construction materials 191w
Greece 192w

Imports
Cement 44w
Unfair competition 231w
Wheat 164w

In Vitro Fertilisation Departmental Committee 155w

Income
Gas reserves 126w
Oil reserves 126w
Public sector assets 125w

Income support scheme 207-8w

Income tax
Tax yields 124-5w

Income tax assessment
Administrative delays 315-6w

Independent prosecution service
Conditions of employment 170-1w

Independent television companies 44-5w

India
Immigration applications 60w

Indonesia
East Timor 60w
Human rights 58w
Ministers visits abroad 58w

Industrial arbitration
Educational Institute of Scotland 557
School teachers 552-3
Teachers 556-7, 558

Industrial buildings 191w

Industrial design
Training awards schemes 224-5w

Industrial development
Port Glasgow (08.11.85) 287-94

Industrial disputes
Coal mining 121w, 560
Examinations 187-8w, 554
Police misconduct 560
Public order policing 560
Silentnight (06.11.85) 99-107
Teachers 188w, 269w, 553

Industrial health & safety
Computer terminals 301w

Industrial investment
Public expenditure 424

Industrial training 137-8w

Industrial training schemes 130w
Textiles 224-5w

Industry
Queen's speech (12.11.85) 465-534

Inflation
Personal savings 410-11
Scotland 550

Information technology centres 224w
Government grants 224w

Initial teacher training 294w
Portsmouth Polytechnic 294w

Inner city areas
Government grants 684
Public expenditure 682-3
Urban programme (07.11.85) 211-8

Inquiries
Legionnaires disease 416
Police national computer 178w
Wallace, Colin 247w

Insolvency
East Anglia 42-3w
Small businesses 130w

Insolvency Act 1985 191-2w

Institute of Zoology 169-70w

Interest rates
Public Works Loan Board 124w

International conferences
Geneva 196w

International cooperation
Defence contracts 194w

International Fund for Agricultural Development
Africa 144w
UK contributions 296w

International Youth Year
Government grants 48w

International Youth Year 1985 48w

Intervention Board
Cash limits 14w

Intervention stocks
EC budget 198w, 276w

Interviews
Clement, Harry 123w

Inter-city rail transport 301

Invalidity benefits
Additional pensions 333w
Child dependency additions 158w
Social security recipients 200w

Investment
Occupational pensions 418
Regional airports 71-2w

IRA
Bombings 682

Iran
Arms exports 232w

Iraq
Arms exports 232w

Irish Sailors & Soldiers Land Trust 144w

Iron & steel industry
Mexico 47w
Scotland 190w, 550

Irving, Mr Charles
Questions
Aftercare hostel grant scheme, Voluntary organisations 239w
Bail hostels 237-8w
Bail verification schemes, Magistrates courts 238w
Crown courts, Remand in custody 171w
Employment 181w
Health insurance 280w
Health service staff, Labour costs 331-3w
"Home Improvement Consultation Paper" 166w
Hospitals, Patients 279w
Managing the long term prison system 178w
NHS, Administrative costs 331w
Prison accommodation, Sanitation 237w
Prison overcrowding 237w
Prison population 237w
Prisons, Expenditure 238-9w
Probation, Expenditure 238w
Reparation by offenders 236-7w
Youth custody, Prisons 239w

Island councils
Local government expenditure 146w
Rate support grants 146w

Isle of Dogs Enterprise Zone 23w
Canary Wharf 23w

Isle of Man Steam Packet Company 45w
Mergers 45w

Israel
Arms trade 144w

Jackson, Mr Robert
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 724, 740-4, 772

Jacobson Chemicals 91w
Cosmetic Products (Safety) Regulations 1984 28w
Foetal tissue 91w

Janner, Mr Greville
Questions
Business statement 694

Japan
Anti dumping duties 231w

Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 485-9
Questions
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 550

Jessel, Mr Toby
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 701
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 91-2, 97
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 130
Questions
Juries 28-9w
M25 297
Official secrets, Cyprus 682
St. Marys Hospital, Hampton 421

Job creation schemes
Dundee 253-4w

Job start scheme (12.11.85) 444-60

Jobclubs (12.11.85) 444-60

John W McKay 309w
Shipbuilding 309w

Johnson Matthey 424-5

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Questions
Fishery protection 277-8w

Johnston, Sir Russell
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 714, 735-40, 768
Questions
Severe weather payments 545
Trustee savings banks, Privatisation 564-5

Joint manpower watch 97-8w

Joint speech research unit
Government Communications Headquarters 84w
Trade union membership 84w

Joint speed research unit 84w

Jones, Mr Barry
Questions
Day care of children, Wales 211-2w
Drinking & driving, Wales 30w
Geriatric patients, Wales 215w
Geriatrics, Wales 212-6w
Manufacturing industries, Wales 211-2w
NHS, Wales 38-40w

Jones, Mr Robert B
Questions
Transport infrastructure, Confederation of British Industry 304

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael, *Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*
Debates etc
Agriculture Bill 1985/86, 1R (07.11.85) 118
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 6-8w
Agricultural products, Prices 277w
Fishery protection 277-8w
Intervention Board, Cash limits 14w

Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith, *Secretary of State for Education and Science*
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 363, 365, 392-400
Questions
Burnham Committee 2w
Educational finance 102-6w
General Certificate of Secondary Education 267w
General Certificate of Secondary Education, Teacher training 106-7w
School meals, Child care 9-10w
Student loans 111w
Teacher training 294w
Teachers, Industrial disputes 269w

Joseph, Keith 100w
Dismissal 100w

Judgments
Age of consent 415
Trustee savings banks 422, 423, 424, 564, 565, 566

Juries 28-9w, 124w, 242w, 306
Convictions 27w
Northern Ireland 293w
Official secrets 682
Trials 27w

Kane, Jock 99-101w
Government Communication Headquarters 99-101w

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 130-8

Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 762, 765, 769
Oral question time point of order (11.11.85) 305, 312
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 578
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 320
Questions
Abbeystead pumping station, Explosion 423

Kennedy, Mr Charles
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 457
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 321, 329, 368-70
Trustee savings banks, Prime Ministers questions (12.11.85) 430
Questions
Agriculture, Highlands of Scotland 185w
Children, Police custody 251w
Crown Immunity, Scotland 559
Driving tests, Administrative delays 70w
Resource Allocation Working Party, Statistics 417
Severe weather payments, Scotland 547
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 150w
Trustee savings banks, Privatisation 422, 566
Unruly children, Scotland 86 8-10w

Kenwood House 306

Key, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Road safety (15.11.85) 801, 837-43

Kidneys
Transplant surgery 158-9w

Kilfedder, Mr James
Questions
Urban areas, Northern Ireland 246w

Kilroy-Silk, Mr Robert
Questions
Prison visitors, Public appointments 29w
School leaving, Take-up of employment 302w
Unemployment, Knowsley 302w
Unemployment, Merseyside 302w

King, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Road safety (15.11.85) 841-3
Questions
Motorways, Lighting 259-60w
Motorways, Lorries 73w
Motorways, Road traffic control 78w
M1, Road traffic control 79w

King, Rt Hon Tom, *Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Debates etc
Northern Ireland (Loans) Bill 1985/86, 1R (07.11.85) 118-9
Questions
Anglo-Irish 676
Anglo-Irish talks 246w, 672-3, 673-4, 675-6, 677, 680
Anglo-Irish talks, Border security in Ireland 675
Anglo-Irish talks, Northern Ireland Government 674-5
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 245w
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 127w
Government assistance to industry, Harland & Wolff 10w
Northern Ireland Government, Devolution 677
Northern Ireland Office, Cash limits 96w
Prerogative of mercy, Northern Ireland Government 672
Security, Northern Ireland 245w, 679-80

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 11-18
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks, Unparliamentary expressions 683
Business statement 112-3, 687-8
9 Signal Regiment, Security 99w
Public expenditure, Industrial investment 424

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Questions
Aids, Research 149w
British Council, Government grants 197w
Departmental coordination, Overseas aid 232w
Housing benefits, Occupational pensions 410-11
Overseas aid 101w, 233w
Overseas students, Tuition fees 173w
Overseas trade, Africa 309-11
Prime Minister visits abroad, Africa 232w
Rates & rating, Scotland 554-5

Knight, Mr Greg
Questions
Motorways, Road construction 262w

Knight, Dame Jill
Questions
Contraceptives, Young people 415

Knowles, Mr Michael
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 765-8

Knowsley
Unemployment 302w

Knox, Mr David
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 512-5

Korea
War casualties 307w

Labour costs
Health service staff 331-3w

Labour mobility
Dept of the Environment 20w

Lambeth
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 155-6w

Lambie, Mr David
Questions
Civil defence, Crosshouse Hospital 547-8
Transient people, Scotland 172w

Lamont, Mr Norman, *Minister of State for Defence Procurement*
Questions
Armed forces, Press releases 257-8w
Armed forces strength, Defence industries employment 85w
Army, Protective clothing 257w
Defence, Technology transfer 194w
Defence contracts, International cooperation 194w
Government Communications Headquarters, Joint speech research unit 84w
Rosyth Dockyard, Asbestos 84-5w
Strategic defence initiative, Defence research 257w
Trident, Testing 139-40w

Lanarkshire Health Board 61-2w, 63w
Meningitis 61-2w, 63w

Land acquisition
Public inquiries 308w

Land drainage
Agricultural products 277w
Farm capital grants scheme 556

Land pollution
Research 22-3w

Land use 16-7w
Agricultural land 56w

Languages education
Welsh language 209w

Lasswade
Veterinary services 197-8w

Latham, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 449
Questions
Arms control treaties 100w
Anglo-Irish talks 231w, 673
Business statement 691

Contingency reserve 310
Limited list prescribing, Appeals 413

Law enforcement 243w

Lawler, Mr Geoff
Questions
Drug crimes, Extradition 123w
Local government reform, Local government staff 118w, 223w

Lawrence, Mr Ivan
Debates etc
Matthew Brown, Monopolies & Mergers Commission reports (13.11.85) 572
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 486
Questions
Civil servants, Immunity from prosecution 2-3w
Confederation of British Industry, Small businesses 426
Crown courts, Summary trial 319w
Custodial treatment, Compensation 242w
European Convention on Human Rights 234w

Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Debates etc
Autumn statement, Ministerial statements (12.11.85) 431-43
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 583-93, 596
Questions
European monetary system 316w
Exchange rates, Exchange control 316-7w

Lea Valley Regional Park Authority 222w
Local government reform 222w

Ledger building 310w

Lee, Mr John, Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement
Questions
Air force flying, Compensation 258-9w

Legal Advice & Assistance (Financial Conditions) Regulations 1985 (12.11.85) 464

Legal Advice & Assistance (Scotland) (Financial Conditions) Regulations 1985 (12.11.85) 464

Legal aid
Administrative delays 26-7w
Billing 26-7w
Certification 26w
Scotland 189w

Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) Regulations 1985 (12.11.85) 464

Legal Aid (Scotland) (Financial Conditions) Regulations 1985 (12.11.85) 464

Legionnaires disease 251w
Glasgow 415-6
Inquiries 416
Public inquiries 251w
Stafford 415-6

Legislation
British citizenship 243w
Building societies 3-4w
Human embryo experiments 155w
Local government 310w
Nationalised industries 316w
Noise control 309w
Nuclear war 48w
Pay methods 181-2w
Salmon 1w
Wars 48w

Leicestershire
Bus services 81w

Leigh, Mr Edward
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 709
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 379
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 673-4
A1, Road safety 303
Local government reform, Local government staff 165w
Social security reviews 152w

Leighton, Mr Ron
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 451
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 501-5

Lembach, Pedro 143w

Lester, Mr Jim
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 451
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 340-3
Questions
Cable & Wireless, Government shareholding 4w
Overseas Development Administration, Development aid 311-2

Lewis, Sir Kenneth
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 439
Questions
Business statement 691-2

Lewis, Mr Ron
Debates etc
Matthew Brown, Monopolies & Mergers Commission reports (13.11.85) 571
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 124

Lewis, Mr Terry
Questions
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Civil service manpower 330-1w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Overtime 331-2w
European Road Safety Year, UK contributions 175w
Greater Manchester Residuary Body, Disclosure of information 218w
Greater Manchester Residuary Body, Public appointments 218w
London Residuary Body, Public appointments 217w
Merseyside Residuary Body, Public appointments 217w
Motorcycles, Driving offences 265-6w
Motorcycles, Road traffic offences 330w
South Yorkshire Residuary Body, Public appointments 219w
Tyne & Wear Residuary Body, Public appointments 216w
West Midlands Residuary Body, Public appointments 218-9w
West Yorkshire Residuary Body, Public appointments 219w

Libraries
Northern Ireland 95w

Libyan Arab Republic
Foreign policy 57w

Licensing
Car hire 82w
Night clubs 33w
Taxis 82w

Lighting
Motorways 259-60w, 297
M45 259w
Roads 259-60w

Lilley, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 503

Limited list prescribing 152w, 283w, 413, 414
Appeals 152w, 283w, 413
Complaints 414
Oral mucolytics 413

Lines of Communication Agreement 83w

List D schools 252w
Scotland 252w

Listed buildings
County Hall 221w

Litherland, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 453

Liver diseases
Death 200-2w
Transplant surgery 200-2w

Liverpool
Housing starts 119w

Liverpool City Council 94w, 424-5
Local government staff 94w
Redundancy 424-5

Livsey, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 250-2
Questions
Wheat, Imports 164w

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 708
Questions
Business statement 698
Training workshops, Moss Side 230w
Youth training scheme, Greater Manchester 230w
Youth training scheme, Voluntary organisations 229-30w

Local authorities
Personal social services 152w
Road tax 264w
Welsh language 38w

Local authorities in Northern Ireland
Sinn Fein 677-8

Local education authorities
Parents rights 108w

Local enterprise agencies (12.11.85) 444-60

Local government
Legislation 310w

Local Government Act 1972 38w, 310w
Local government expenditure 310w

Local Government Bill 1985/86, 1R (07.11.85)

Local government elections
Voting rights 243w

Local government expenditure
Books 314-5w
Brent & Harrow Engineering Group Training Association 120w
Brixton Young Families Housing Aid Association 120w
Hounslow Engineering Group Training Association 120w
Island councils 146w
Local Government Act 1972 310w
Public inquiries 146w
Road works 299-300

Local government finance
Woolwich ferry 261w

Local government functions
Birmingham City Council 310w
Local government reform 310w

Local Government Planning & Land Act 1980 19w

Local government property
Local government reform 22w

Local government reform
Arts finance (14.11.85) 699-708
Birmingham City Council 310w
Concessionary fares 295-6
Greater London 262w
Greater London Council 119w
Lea Valley Regional Park Authority 222w
Local government functions 310w
Local government property 22w
Local government staff 21w, 22w, 118-9w, 165w, 223w
Property transfer 21w
Roads 81w
Waste disposal 20w

Woolwich ferry 261w
Youth training scheme 230w

Local government social services
Home care services 157w
Mental health community care 152w
Personal social services 153w

Local government staff 24w
Chinese community 29-30w
Compensation 118-9w, 165w
Conditions of employment 223w
Early retirement 21w
Greater London Council 22w
Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission 119w
Liverpool City Council 94w
Local government reform 21w, 22w, 118-9w, 165w, 223w
Manpower 66w
Northern Ireland 97-8w
Redundancy 22w
Scotland 66w
Social security benefits 94w
South Bank 147w
Successor authorities 22w
Wales 39w

"Local housing statistics" 119w

Local plans 65w

Lofthouse, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc
Darfield Main colliery (12.11.85) 539, 543-4
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 56-8
Questions
Stanley Royd Hospital, Salmonella 93w

Lome convention
Development aid 309
European community aid 309
STABEX 145w

London boroughs
Property transfer 21w
Rehousing 19-20w

London docklands
Planning permission 120w

London Docklands Development Corporation
Compulsory purchase 308w
Employment 309w
Expenditure 309w
Property transfer 309-10w

London docklands railway 76w
Construction 76w

London Regional Transport 298
Transport policy 298, 299

London Residuary Body 217w
Public appointments 217w, 220w

London to Weymouth railway line
Rolling stock 68w

London & Metropolitan Government Staff Commission 147w

Lord, Mr Michael
Questions
A140, Road construction 175-6w
A140, Road traffic 265w
Drug crimes, Prisoners 236w
Sub post offices, Suffolk 244w

Lorries
A11 326w
Greater London 78w
Greater London Council 74-5w
Motorways 73w
Road traffic 297
Road traffic control 74-5w

Lothian
Board & lodging charges 150w
Roads (11.11.85) 295

Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill 1985/86
IR (11.11.85) 295

Low income
Households 334w

Low pay
Pay 180-2w

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Debates etc
Darfield Main colliery (12.11.85) 542
Questions
Business statement 118
Unemployment, Health 417

Luce, Mr Richard, Minister of State Privy Council Office (Minister for the Arts)
Debates etc
Arts Council, Ministerial statements (04.11.85) 699-708
Museum of London Bill 1985/86, IR (07.11.85) 119
Questions
Arts Council, Government grants 269-70w
Arts finance, Cash limits 4w
Civil servants, Immunity from prosecution 2-3w
Computers in government departments, Civil service department 315w
Public libraries, Expenditure 314-5w
South Bank, Local government staff 147w

Lyell, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 345-8
Questions
UK companies abroad, USA 101w

Lynch, Mark 223w

McColl Committee see Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review

McCrea, Rev William
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 673
Crozier, Fred, Members correspondence 95-6w
Libraries, Northern Ireland 95w
Local authorities in Northern Ireland, Sinn Fein 678
School governors, Omagh District Council 95w

McCrindle, Mr Robert
Questions
Air traffic, Greater London 76w
A12, Road safety barriers 263w
Buses, Driving tests 263w
Buses, Tachographs 263w
Data Protection Registrar, Home computers 244w
Driving licences, Buses 263-4w
Family doctors, Pay systems 284w
Family doctors, Retirement age 284w
Housing benefits, "Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 410
Mental health community care 284w

McCullough, Muriel 177w
Prisoners transfers 177w

McCurley, Mrs Anna
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 177
Questions
Prisoners on remand, Prisons 549
Teachers, Pay 553-4
Teachers, Scotland 188w

McCusker, Mr Harold
Debates etc
Anglo-Irish talks (13.11.85) 574, 661
Prime Ministers question time point of order (14.11.85) 686
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 674
British citizenship, Northern Ireland 425
Business statement 689
Driving licences, Northern Ireland 248w
Medical cards, Northern Ireland 247-8w
Northern Ireland Government, Extradition 678-9

McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 721, 722-9
Questions
Motorways, Lighting 297
Trustee savings banks, Ownership 566-7

MacGregor, Rt Hon John, Chief Secretary to the Treasury
Questions
Civil service manpower, Annual reports 10-1w
Expenditure 125-6w
Export financing 67w
Nationalised industries, Legislation 316w
Public sector assets, Privatisation 272w, 273w

McKay, Mr Allen
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 442
Darfield Main colliery (12.11.85) 541
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 456
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 81-5, 96

MacKay, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 257-7
Questions
Dept of Energy, Cash limits 12-3w
Government assistance to industry, Harland & Wolff 10w
Northern Ireland Office, Cash limits 96w
Social Services Select Committee on Mental Health Community Care 150w

MacKay, Mr John, Under-Secretary of State for Scotland
Questions
Acid rain, Trees 63w
Agricultural advisory services, Scotland 186-7w
Agricultural research, Scotland 188w
Agriculture, Highlands of Scotland 185w
Agriculture, Scotland 184w, 185w
Children, Police custody 251w
Doctors list of patients, Scotland 186w
Drug abuse, Scotland 187w
Drug crimes, Strathclyde 184w
Farm capital grants scheme, Land drainage 556
Farm capital grants scheme, Scotland 555-6
Greater Glasgow Health Board, NHS finance 187w
Health service staff, Scotland 312-4w
Legal aid, Scotland 189w
Legionnaires disease, Public inquiries 251w
Meningitis, Lanarkshire Health Board 61-2w
Meningitis, Scotland 61w, 62-3w
Peterhead Prison, Hospital admissions 252w
Peterhead Prison, Prison discipline 61w
Peterhead Prison, Prison overcrowding 548-9
Peterhead Prison, Prison staff 252w
Prison overcrowding 549
Prison overcrowding, Scotland 548, 549
Prisoners on remand, Prisons 549
Severe weather payments 545
Severe weather payments, Scotland 545-6, 547
West Lothian Hospital, Construction 251w

McKelvey, Mr William
Questions
Legal aid, Scotland 189w
Scottish Trades Union Congress, Economic situation 549-50

MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 46-9
Questions
Chicago Pacific, Takeovers 194w
Rates & rating, Scotland 187w
Warrant sales, Scotland 172w

Maclean, Mr David
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 458
Matthew Brown, Monopolies & Mergers Commission reports (13.11.85) 570-1
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 153, 175, 191-4

Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 522
Questions
Brampton bypass 77w
Construction materials, Spain 191w

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 707
Matthew Brown, Monopolies & Mergers Commission reports (13.11.85) 572
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 144-7
Questions
Business statement 117
Dornoch firth, Bridges 188-9w
European Convention on Human Rights 684-5
Official Secrets Act 1911, Prosecutions 27w
Prison overcrowding 549

McNair-Wilson, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 333-7
Questions
Human embryo experiments, Legislation 155w
Medical research, Expenditure 266-7w
RAF Greenham Common, Road accidents 258w

McNair-Wilson, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 440
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 52-6

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Questions
Armed forces civilians, Planning 84w
Armed forces pensions 140-2w
Armed forces pensions, Costs 141w
Armed forces pensions, Defence expenditure 141w
Boyle, Lt Col 83w
Elenas, Costas, Immunity from prosecution 28w
Hospitals, Armed forces casualties 93w
Hospitals, Civil defence 93w
Lines of Communication Agreement 83w
NATO, Armed forces deployment 84w
Northern Ireland Assembly, Elections 672
Wars, Legislation 48w

McQuarrie, Mr Albert
Questions
Agriculture, Scotland 184w
Farm capital grants scheme, land drainage 556
Gibraltar, Spain 57w
Lorries, Greater London 78w
Lorries, Greater London Council 74-5w
MSV Tharos 53-5w
Peterhead Prison, Hospital admissions 252w
Peterhead Prison, Prison discipline 61w
Peterhead Prison, Prison overcrowding 548-9
Peterhead Prison, Prison staff 252w
Peterhead Prison, Prison visits 223w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Peterhead 230w
Social security benefits 155w
Spain 57w

McWilliam, Mr John
Questions
Dunston Hill Hospital 199w
Dunston Hill Hospital, Fire prevention 199w
Geriatrics, Gateshead Health Authority 199w
Hospitals, Fire prevention 156w

Madden, Mr Max
Questions
Business statement 696
Entry clearances, Administrative delays 196w

Madel, Mr David
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 350-2
Questions
General Certificate of Secondary Education, Teacher training 106-7w

Maginnis, Mr Ken
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks, Border security in Ireland 675

Magistrates
Political doctrines 291-3w
Wales 291-3w

Magistrates courts
Bail verification schemes 238w

Magnox reactors
Plutonium 55w

Major, Mr John, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health & Social Security*
Questions
Child benefit, Education of children at home 149w
Child benefit, Expenditure 283-4w
Christmas bonus 149w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Lambeth 155-6w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Huyton 159-60w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Civil service manpower 330-1w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Overtime 331-2w
Economic recession, Standard of living 419
Gardiner, J, Members correspondence 335w
Households, Low income 334w
Housing benefits, Social security claims 159w
Invalidity benefits, Additional pensions 333w
Invalidity benefits, Child dependency additions 158w
Invalidity benefits, Social security recipients 200w
Non-contributory invalidity pension, Social security recipients 280w
Retirement age, Costs 157w
Sick pay 417
Social security reviews 419
State earnings related pension scheme, Occupational pensions 419-20
Supplementary benefits, Availability for work 88w
Supplementary benefits, Coventry 151w
Supplementary benefits, Proof of identity 87w
War pensions, Orange badge scheme 281w

Malins, Mr Humfrey
Debates etc
Urban programme (07.11.85) 211-4

Malone, Mr Gerald
Questions
Council house sales, Aberdeen 185w
Teachers, Scotland 557

Management techniques
Data Protection Registrar 242w

"Managing the Long Term Prison System" 178w

Manchester
Hospital waiting lists 283w
Surgery 283w

Manchester Airport 72w, 82w, 128-9w
Management 72w
Railway network 128-9w

Manchester University
Ministers domestic visits 423

Manpower
Commission for Racial Equality 32-3w
Community nurses 87w
Handicapped workers 180w
Health and Safety Executive 179-80w
Immigration officers 239-40w
Local government staff 66w
Manufacturing industries 63w, 66w
Nurses 147w
Police 121w
Prison hospitals 177w
Service industries 64w

Manual workers
Staff earnings related pension scheme 418

Manufactured imports
Electronic equipment 41-2w

Manufacturing industries
Manpower 63w, 66w
Scotland 63w, 66w
Wales 211-2w

Maples, Mr John
Questions
Charitable trusts, Greater London 25w

Marek, Dr John
Questions
Inter-city rail transport 301
Mobility allowance 153w

Marginal land
Scotland 545-6

Marine nature reserves 127w

"Marine Pilotage Consultation Paper" 82w

Market share 190-1w
Grocery trade 190-1w

Marlow, Mr Tony
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 713, 716, 723, 728, 735, 736, 738, 739, 771
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 126
Questions
Ambulance services, Pay settlements 159-60w
Business, EC law 138w
Business statement 116, 693
Northern Ireland Government 679
State earnings related pension scheme 148w
Trials, Juries 27w

Marshall, Mr David
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 68
Road safety (15.11.85) 794, 814
Questions
Agency nurses, Costs 251w
Defective housing, Glasgow 189w
Drug crimes, Scotland 172w
Glasgow eastern area renewal 189w
Motorways, Road safety 76w
Rates & rating, Scotland 558
Scottish Development Agency, Civil service manpower 251w

Martin, Mr Michael J
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 194-7
Questions
British Rail Engineering, Springburn 78-9w
Drug crimes, Strathclyde 184w
Legionnaires disease, Public inquiries 251w

Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 675

Matthew Brown 194w, (13.11.85) 569-73
Ministerial statements (13.11.85) 569-73
Monopolies & Mergers Commission reports (13.11.85) 569-73
Takeovers 194w

Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Questions
Community nurses 148w
Drinking & driving 72w

Maxton, Mr John
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 197
Questions
Greater Glasgow Health Board, NHS finance 187w
Rate rebates, Scotland 555

Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr Robin
Questions
Postal workers, Pay 40-1w
Road works, Local government expenditure 300

Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick, *Solicitor-General*
Questions
Cosmetic Products (Safety) Regulations 1984 Celiaton Laboratory Research 28w
Crown courts, Remand in custody 171w
Director of Public Prosecutions, Prosecutions 307-8
Drugs, Smuggling 307
Duty solicitors 27w
Elenas, Costas, Immunity from prosecution 28w
Falkland Islands, War Cabinet 27-8w
Fraud, City of London 305-6
Independent prosecution service, Conditions of employment 170-1w
Juries 124w, 306
Legal aid, Administrative delays 26-7w
Middlesex Crown Court, Building repairs 306
Official Secrets Act 1911, Prosecutions 27w
Pre-trial procedures, Northern Ireland 26w
Prosecutions, Civil service manpower 307
Prosecutions, Drug crimes 308
Prosecutions, Personal records 306-7
Prosecutions, Police 306
Trials, Juries 27w

Meacher, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 323, 326-33
Questions
Elderly, Board & lodging charges 91-2w
Empty housing 17w
Expenditure 125-6w
Housing benefits, Occupational pensions 411
NHS, Hospital beds 92w
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 209-8w
Social security abuse, Board & lodging charges 420-1
Social security reviews 92w

Meadowcroft, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 89-91
Questions
Drugs, Smuggling 307
Home helps 157w
Limited list prescribing, Appeals 413
Overseas aid, Contingency reserve 309
Public transport, West Yorkshire 81-2w
Social Fund, Social security reviews 150w
Strategic defence initiative, EC external relations 197w
Urban programme, Public expenditure 682-3

Meat
EC law 164w
Growth promoting hormones 164w

Medical Cards
Northern Ireland 247-8w
Northern Ireland Central Services Agency for the Health & Social Services 247-8w

Medical ethics
Public appointments 91w

Medical examinations
Driving 174-5w

Medical research
Expenditure 266-7w
Pelvic diseases 288-90w

Medical Research Council
Expenditure 107w
Research finance 266-7w

Medical services committees 278w
Disclosure of information 278w

Medical treatments
Drug abuse 63w
Greater London 286w

Mehta, Shailesh 60w
Immigration applications 60w

Mellor, Mr David, *Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department*
Questions
Aftercare hostel grant scheme, Voluntary organisations 239w
Bail hostels 237-8w
Bail verification schemes, Magistrates courts 238w
Blundeston Prison, Prison administration 177w
Breathalysers 244-5w
Crown courts, Summary trial 319w
Custodial treatment, Compensation 242w
Custodial treatment, Men 244w
Dangerous mental patients 110-11
Dangerous mental patients, Mental health review tribunals 111
Drinking & driving, Wales 30w
Driving offences 266w
Drug crimes, Extradition 123w
Drug crimes, Prisoners 236w
Dwarf throwing 30w
Electoral register, Disclosure of information 242w
Frankland Prison, Building alterations 324w
Juries 28-9w, 242w
Local government elections, Voting rights 243w
Managing the long term prison system 178w
McCullough, Muriel, Prisoners transfers 177w
Motorcycles, Driving offences 265-6w
Motorcycles, Road traffic offences 330w
Night clubs, Licensing 33w
Operation Julie, Prison sentences 32w
Pickering, Peter, Dangerous mental patients 109-10
Prison accommodation, Sanitation 237w
Prison employment 324w
Prison governors, Prison administration 324w
Prison hospitals, Manpower 177w
Prison medical services, NHS 177w
Prison overcrowding 237w
Prison population 237w
Prison visitors, Annual reports 323w
Prison visitors, Public appointments 29w
Prisoners, Drugs 177-8w
Prisoners mail, Censorship 323w
Prisons, Crown immunity 176w
Prisons, Expenditure 238-9w
Probation, Expenditure 238w
Reparation by offenders 236-7w
Summertime 243w
Wandsworth Prison, Building repairs 321w
Wandsworth Prison, Catering 321w
Wandsworth Prison, Prison employment 320-1w
Wandsworth Prison, Prison staff 321-2w
Wandsworth Prison, Prisoners exercise 321w
Wandsworth Prison, Sanitation 319-20w
Wormwood Scrubs, Prison accommodation 322-3w
Wormwood Scrubs, Prison employment 322w
Wormwood Scrubs, Prisoners exercise 323w
Young offenders, Education 121w
Youth custody, Prisons 239w

Members
Immigration controls 31-2w
Immigration rules 121w

Members attendance
Speakers rulings & statements (12.11.85) 461, 462

Members conduct
Speakers rulings & statements (06.11.85) 11, (13.11.85) 645

Members correspondence
Crozier, Fred 95-6w
Gardiner, J 335w
Speakers rulings & statements (07.11.85) 118

Members interventions
Speakers rulings & statements (12.11.85) 480

Members speeches
Speakers rulings & statements (07.11.85) 173, (08.11.85) 262, (11.11.85) 317, (12.11.85) 465, (13.11.85) 575, 604, 627, 645

Members suspension
Speakers rulings & statements (11.11.85) 313-6

Men
Custodial treatment 244w

Meningitis
Deaths 62-3w
Lanarkshire Health Board 61-2w, 63w
Scotland 61w, 62-3w

Mental Health Act 1983 287w

Mental health community care 150w, 284w
Local government social services 152w

Mental health review tribunal rules 1983 109-10

Mental health review tribunals
Dangerous mental patients 111
Park Land Special Hospital 109-10

Merchant, Mr Piers
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 452
Matthew Brown, Monopolies & Mergers Commission reports (13.11.85) 572-3

Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Oil Pollution) (Amendment) Order 1985 (12.11.85) 464

Mergers
Isle of Man Steam Packet Company 45w
Sealink 45w

Merit certificates 267w

Merseyside
Factory closures 227w
Police 30w
Redundancy 227w, 228w
Unemployment 302w

Merseyside Residuary body
Public appointments 217w

Metropolitan counties
Urban planning 221-2w

Metropolitan districts
Pay 118w

Metropolitan Police
BBC 123w
Expenditure 317-8w
Office furniture 317-8w

Mexico
Iron & steel industry 47w
Overseas trade 47w

Meyer, Sir Anthony
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 750-2, 754
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 74-6
Questions
Road traffic control, Roundabouts 74w

Michie, Mr Bill
Questions
Chinese community, Local government staff 29-30w
Gas accidents, Explosions 52w
Government grants to local authorities 29w
Telephone tapping, Sheffield 324w
Urban programme, Chinese community 167-8w
Urban programme, Ethnic minorities 166w

Microelectronic support unit 295w

Mid Glamorgan
Unemployment 37w

Middlesex Crown Court 306
Art works 306
Building repairs 306

Midland link motorways 71w
Road works 329w

Mikardo, Mr Ian
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 243-8, 250, 264
Questions

Isle of Dogs Enterprise Zone, Canary Wharf 23w

Military aircraft
Airlines 307w

Milk
Production quotas 163w

Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 704-5
Questions
Trustee savings banks, Privatisation 565

Miller, Dr M S
Questions
Hospitals, NHS finance 421

Minimum wage
Wages councils 301w

Ministerial Group of the Misuse of Drugs 100w

Ministerial statement
Speakers rulings & statements (13.11.85) 570

Ministerial statements
Arts Council (14.11.85) 699-708
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 431-43
Civil servants 100w
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 444-60
Matthew Brown (13.11.85) 569-73
Public Record Office 231w
Speakers rulings & statements (12.11.85) 441-3, 457 (13.11.85) 574, 661

Ministers domestic visits
East London River Crossing 328w
Manchester University 423

Ministers visits abroad
Hong Kong 57-8w
Indonesia 58w
Singapore 57-8w

Ministry of Defence
Cash limits 85w
Press releases 257-8w

Mini-Enterprises in Schools Project 46w

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Questions
Bankruptcy, Great Grimsby 305w
Council house sales, Great Grimsby 118w
Council housing, Great Grimsby 117w
Energy efficiency, Public buildings 226w
Housing investment programme, Great Grimsby 219-20w
Housing stock, Great Grimsby 118w
Radioactive waste disposal 23w
Radioactive waste disposal, Public participation in planning 118w
Transport of hazardous materials 128w

***Mitchell, Mr David**, Under-Secretary of State for Transport*
Questions
British Rail, Capital investment 75w
British Rail, Procurement 71w
British Rail, Railway catering 80w
British Rail, Railway timetables 176w
British Rail Engineering 78w
British Rail Engineering, Springburn 78-9w
British Railways Board, Railway workers 72w
Bus services, Competition 81w
Buses, Tachographs 75w
Car hire, Licensing 82w
Channel crossing 81w
Channel crossing, Environmental impact assessment 128w
Channel crossing, Upper Waiting Hall 84w 326w
Concessionary fares, Pensioners 296
Freight transport 69w
Inter-city rail transport 301
London docklands railway, Construction 76w
Public transport, West Yorkshire 81-2w
Railway electrification, Bournemouth to Weymouth Railway Line 78w
Railway fares, Stoke on Trent 301
Railway timetables 302
Railway track, Repairs & maintenance 76w
Railway travel, Bicycles 301
Railway travel, Railway timetables 302
Rolling stock, London to Weymouth railway line 69w
Taxicards, Greater London Council 71w
Travel concessions 72w, 296
Travel concessions, Greater Manchester 297
Travel concessions, Transport Act 1985 295-6
Travel concessions, West Midlands 296
West Midlands light rapid transit system 264w

Mobility allowance 153w

Mobility of disabled
Greater London 71w, 281w, 302-3

Mobility officers 246w
Northern Ireland 246w

Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Debates etc
Anglo-Irish talks (13.11.85) 574
Prime Ministers question time point of order (14.11.85) 685
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 34-7
Questions
Anglo Irish talks 671
Security, Northern Ireland 679

Money resolution (13.11.85) 545

Monopolies
Newspaper press 43-4w

Monopolies & Mergers Commission
Scottish & Newcastle Breweries 194w

"Monopolies & Mergers Commission reports" (13.11.85) 569-73
Matthew Brown (13.11.85) 569-73

Monro, Sir Hector
Questions
Agriculture, Scotland 184-5w
Public expenditure, Scotland 550
Severe weather payments, Scotland 545-6
Sports Council, Government grants 222-3w

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Debates etc
South Trafford Health Authority (11.11.85) 401-3
Questions
Business statement 114
Motor vehicle testing 66w

Monuments
War casualties 307w

***Moore, Mr John**, Financial Secretary to the Treasury*
Questions
Black economy, Coins 195w
Cable & Wireless, Government shareholding 4w
Income tax, Tax yields 124-5w
Income tax assessment, Administrative delays 315-6w
Oil reserves, Income 126w
Public sector assets, Income 125w
Road tax, Caravans 129w
Unitary taxation 124w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Questions
Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review 205w
Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970 153w
Cinemas, Handicapped 31w
Criminal injuries compensation, Bombings 682
Dwarf throwing 30w
Hospital waiting lists, Manchester 283w
Manchester Airport, Railway network 128-9w
Orange badge scheme, War pensions 262w
Police interrogation, Deaf 121-2w
Prosthetics, Expenditure 205w
Special schools, Deaf 268w
State earnings related Pensions scheme, Occupational pensions 419-20
War pensions, Orange badge scheme 281w

Morris, Rt Hon John
Questions
Duty solicitors 27w
Legal aid, Administrative delays 26-7w
Prosecutions, Civil service manpower 307

Morrison, Mr Charles
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 499-501

***Morrison, Mr Peter**, Minister of State for Trade & Industry*
Questions
EC Steel Council 46-7w
English Industrial Estates Corporation, Government grants 192w
English Industrial Estates Corporation, Public sector assets 305w
European Regional Development Fund, EC accession 202-3w
Industrial buildings 191w
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 190w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Privatisation 46w

Morriston Hospital (14.11.85) 779-86

Mortgages
Smith houses 117w

Moss Side 230w
Training workshops 230w

Motor insurance
Motorcycles 265-6w

Motor vehicle testing 68w

Motorcycles
Driving offences 265-6w
Motor insurance 265-6w
Road traffic offences 330w

Motorways
Buses 176w
Lighting 259-60w, 297
Lorries 73w
Police 304-5
Road construction 262w
Road safety 76w, 304
Road traffic 327w
Road traffic control 78w
Road works 73w, 300
Speed limits 297-8

Moynihan, Mr Colin
Questions
EC Transport Council, Shipping 75w

MSV Tharos 53-5w

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin 209w

Multiple occupation
Edinburgh 420

Murphy, Mr Christopher
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 705
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 85-6, 95, 96
Questions
B197, Road traffic 127w
Civil defence, Welwyn & Hatfield District Council 120-1w
Local government expenditure, Local Government Act 1972 310w
Social security reviews 152-3w
Standing charges 295w
Teachers, Industrial disputes 269w

Museum of London Bill 1985/86
1R (07.11.85) 119

Museums & galleries
Greater London (07.11.85) 119

Music education
Education finance 173w

Music therapy 156w, 210w
Wales 210w

M1 76w, 78w, 79w, 259w, 260w, 261w, 327w
Construction costs 260w
Death 260w
Road accidents 260w
Road construction 260w

Road signs 261w
Road traffic 76w, 260-1w
Road traffic control 78w, 79w
Traffic forecasting 260-1w

M6 260w, 304
Road accidents 304

M25 70-1w, 77w, 79w, 175w, 297
Road construction 70-1w
Road safety 175w
Road traffic control 79w
Road works 77w

M40 76w, 327w
Construction costs 327w
Road construction 76w, 327w

M45 259w
Lighting 259w

M66 79-80w
Public inquiries 79-80w

National Advisory Body for Local Authority 108w

National Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education 414-5

National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux 305w

National Bus Company
Privatisation 70w

National income
South East region 45-6w

National insurance contributions 161-3w

Nationalised industries
Accounting 56w
Legislation 316w

"Nationalised Industries Legislation Consultation Paper" 316w

NATO
Armed forces deployment 84w

Nature reserves
Wales 127w

Navy (12.11.85) 463

***Needham, Mr Richard** Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Anglo-Irish agreement 669-70
Anglo-Irish talks 669
Driving licences, Northern Ireland 248w
Health service staff, Northern Ireland 248-50w
Health services, Northern Ireland 669
Local government staff, Northern Ireland 97-8w
Medical Cards, Northern Ireland 247-8w
Northern Ireland Government, Departmental coordination 678
Personal social services, Northern Ireland 246w
Residential care of children, Northern Ireland 247w
Urban areas, Northern Ireland 246w

Negative vetting 66w
House of Commons staff 66w

Nellist, Mr Dave
Questions
Johnson Matthey 424-5
Supplementary benefits, Coventry 151w

Nelson, Mr Anthony
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 438-9
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 472

New Delhi 60w

Newspaper press
Dangerous mental patients 111
Monopolies 43-4w

***Newton, Mr Tony**, Minister of State for Social Security*
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 369-70, 375
Questions
Aids for handicapped 153w
Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review 205-6w
Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review, Prosthetics 284w
Blind, computers 278w
Board & lodging charges, Lothian 150w
Board & lodging charges, Orders & regulations 94w
Child benefit 149w
Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970 153w
Elderly, Board & lodging charges 91-2w
Housing benefits, Costs 411
Housing benefits, Occupational pensions 410-11
Housing benefits, "Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 410
Local government staff, Liverpool City Council 94w
Mobility allowance 153w
Multiple occupation, Edinburgh 420
Non-contributory invalidity pension, Social security recipients 157w
Pensioners, Housing benefits 148w
Pensioners, Personal savings 401-1
Prosthetics, Expenditure 205w
"Reform of Social security Consultation Paper" 207-8w, 410
Severe weather payments 93w, 154w, 155w
Social Fund, Social security review 150w
Social security abuse, Board & lodging charges 420-1
Social security benefits 155w
Social security benefits, Social security reviews 151w
Social security benefits rates, Supplementary benefits 280w
Social security benefits rules, Students 287-8w
Social security reviews 92w, 152-3w
State earnings related pension scheme 148w
Students, Social security benefits 151w
Supplementary Benefits (Requirements & Resources) Misc Prov Regulations 1985 151w
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 150w, 420
Supplementary benefits disregards of income 151w
Youth employment, Board & lodging charges 420

NHS
Administrative costs 331w
Contracts for services 154w, 160w
Crown immunity 150w
Dental services 335w
Expenditure 38-40w
Hospital beds 92w
Prison medical services 177w
Racial discrimination 279w
Tenders 154w
Wales 38-40w

NHS administration
North West region (11.11.85) 401-6

NHS complaints
North West region 278w

NHS finance 160-1w, 200w, 336w
Community care 335w
Greater Glasgow Health Board 187w
Hospitals 421
Regional health authorities 417
Transplant surgery 201-2w

Nicholls, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 580, 582
Questions
Limited list prescribing, Appeals 152w
Supplementary benefits, Availabiliy for work 88w
Supplementsry benefits, Proof of identity 87w

Nicholson, Mr James
Questions
Ulster Agriculture Organisation Society, Government grants 245-6w

Night clubs
Licensing 33w

9 Signal Regiment 83w, 99w
Security 99w

Nitrates
Pollution monitoring 166w
Water pollution 166w

Noise control
EC action 182-3w
Legislation 309w

Non-contributory invalidity pension
Prescription charges 280w
Social security recipients 157w, 280w

Normans Riding Hospital 199w

Norris, Mr Steve
Questions
Social security benefits rules, Students 287-8w

North Devon 81w

North Devon link road 81w
Road construction 81w

North East coast drift fishery 5-6w, 276w
Salmon 276w

North East Thames Regional Health Authority 285-6w

North Ireland
Health service staff 248-50w

North West region
District health authorities (11.11.85) 401-6
Government assistance to industry 426-8
Hospitals 201w, 202w
NHS administration (11.11.85) 401-6
NHS complaints 278w
Regional aid 426-8
School buildings 173-4w

North West Thames Regional Health Authority 154w, 285-6w
Expenditure 154w

North Western Regional Health Authority (11.11.85) 401-6

Northern Ireland
Anglo-Irish talks 197w
Bill of Rights 684-5
British citizenship 425
Cable television 322w
Driving licences 248w
Employment discrimination 127w
Fish conservation 245w
Government loans (07.11.85) 118-9
Health services 669
Juries 293w
Libraries 95w
Local government staff 97-8w
Medical cards 247-8w
Mobility officers 246w
Paramedical staff 248-50w
Personal injury 293w
Personal social services 246w
Planning permission 246w
Pre-trial procedures 26w
Public expenditure 670, 671
Residential care of children 247w
Salmon 245w
Security 245w, 679-80
Sex discrimination 246w
Terrorism 245w
Unemployment 670
Urban areas 246w
World Cup 681
Youth training scheme 93-4w

Northern Ireland Assembly
Devolution 672
Election 671, 672

Northern Ireland Assembly Devolution Report Committee 677

Northern Ireland Central Services Agency for the Health & Social Services 247-8w
Medical cards 247-8w

Northern Ireland Government 671-2, 672-3, 673-4, 675-6, 677, 679, 681, 682, 683
Anglo-Irish talks 674-5
Departmental coordination 678
Devolution 677
Extradition 678-9
Health services 669-70
Political parties 671, 672
Prerogative of mercy 672
Referenda 681
Royal Ulster Constabulary 680
Terrorism 673-4, 675, 680

Northern Ireland Library & Information Services Council 95w

Northern Ireland Office
Cash limits 96w

Northern Ireland (Loans) Bill 1985/86
1R (07.11.85) 118-9

Northern region
Youth unemployment 684

Norwich
Gynaecology 412
Orthopaedics 412
Prime Minister domestic visits 99w

Nuclear fuel reprocessing
Costs 55w

Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive
Public inquiries 178w

Nuclear installations
Nuclear safety 195-6w

Nuclear non proliferation treaty 59-60w

Nuclear physics 109-10w

Nuclear war
Legislation 48w

Nugee Committee see Flats Management Committee of Inquiry

Nurses
Community care 334w
Housing 87w
Manpower 147w
Prison hospitals 177w

O'Brien, Mr William
Debates etc
Darfield Main colliery (12.11.85) 540

Observer, The 43w
Directors 43w
Takeovers 43-4w

"Obtaining Better Value from Further Education" 24w

Occupational pensions
Handicapped workers 419-20
Housing benefits 410-11
Investment 418
State earnings related pension scheme 419-20

Office furniture
Metropolitan Police 317-8w

Official Report
Speakers rulings & statements (12.11.85) 461, 462

Official secrets
Cyprus 682
House of Commons Staff 101w
Juries 682
Trials 28w, 83w, 99w

Official Secrets Act 1911 27w
Prosecutions 27w

Oil reserves
Income 126w

Okehampton bypass 329w
Construction costs 329w
Road construction 329w

Okehampton bypass (Confirmation of Orders) Bill 1985/86 1R (07.11.85) 118, (14.11.85) 710

Omagh District Council 95w
School governors 95w

O'Neill, Mr Martin J
Questions
Severe weather payments, Scotland 546

Onslow, Mr Cranley
Questions
Noise control, Legislation 309w
Salmon, North East coast drift fishery 276w
Salmon, Poaching 5-6w

Open prisons
Prisoners mail 323w

Open University
Government grants 49w
Prime Minister domestic visits 100w

Operation Julie 32w
Prison sentences 32w

Oppenheim, Mr Phillip
Questions
Agricultural products, Prices 277w
Health services staff, Derbyshire 206w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Derbyshire 174w

Opportunities for volunteering scheme 418-9

Oral mucolytics
Limited list prescribing 413

Oral questions
Speakers rulings & statements (11.11.85) 312, (13.11.85) 563 (14.11.85) 698

Orange badge scheme 128w, 262w, 281w
Handicapped drivers 128w
War pensions 262w, 281w

Orders & regulations (12.11.85) 407, 410
Board & lodging charges 94w

Orkney Islands Council 146w

Orthopaedics
Hospital waiting lists 89-91w
Norwich 412

Osborne House 222w

Outer London boroughs
Bus crews 298-9

Overseas aid 34w, 101w, 233w, 297w
Africa 296w, 308
Contingency reserve 309
Departmental coordination 232w
Disaster relief 309, 312
Ethiopia 310
Expenditure 232w
Gambia 36w
Overseas trade 35w
Private sector 296-7w
Queen's speech (08.11.85) 220-86
Refugees 35-6w
United Nations 297w
Voluntary organisations 296-7w

Overseas Development Administration
Dept of Trade & Industry 232w
Development aid 311-2

Overseas Development Administration Shared Scholarship Scheme 36w

Overseas students
Tuition fees 173w

Overseas trade (13.11.85) 545
Africa 309-11
Government grants 309-11
Mexico 47w
Overseas aid 35w

"Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom" (13.11.85) 545

Overtime
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 331-2w

Owen, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 593-9

Owner occupied housing
Subsidies 15w

Ownership
Trustee savings banks 566-7

Paddington Churches Housing Association 15-6w

Page, Sir John
Questions
London Regional Transport, Transport policy 298

Page, Mr Richard
Questions
London docklands railway, Construction 76w

Paisley, Rev Ian
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 37-41
Questions
Security, Northern Ireland 245w

Paramedical staff
Northern Ireland 248-50w
Wales 210-2w

Parental contributions
Armed forces dependents 142w

Parental leave 10w, 182-3w
EC action 10w

Parents rights
Local education authorities 108w
School choice 294w

Park Lane Special Hospital 109-10
Mental health review tribunals 109-10

Parking
Handicapped drivers 262w, 281w

Parking offences
Diplomatic immunity 299-301w

Parliamentary elections (12.11.85) 407

Parris, Mr Matthew
Debates etc
Road safety (15.11.85) 794, 797-8

Parry, Mr Robert
Questions
Afghanistan, Foreign policy 58w
Aids, Blood transfusion 147-8w
Hong Kong, Ministers visits abroad 57-8w
Indonesia, Human rights 58w
Indonesia, Ministers visits abroad 58w
Libyan Arab Republic, Foreign policy 57w
Security, Northern Ireland 679-80
Singapore, Foreign policy 58w

Part-time employment 132-4w
Women 64w

Patchett, Mr Terry
Debates etc
Darfield Main colliery (12.11.85) 536-8, 542

Paternity leave 10w

Patients
Hospitals 279w

Patten, Mr Chris, Minister of State for Education & Science
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 349
Questions
Computers in schools, Finance 295w
Education, Youth custody 110w
General Certificate of Secondary Education, Teacher training 268-9w
Music education, Educational finance 173w
Science education, Educational standards 294-5w

Patten, Mr John, Minister of State for the Environment (Houses, Urban Affairs Construction
Questions
Building inspectors 26w

Council housing, Housing standards 15w
Defective housing, Government grants to local authorities 119w
Empty housing 17w
Flats Management Committee of Inquiry 220w
"Home Improvement Consultation Paper" 166w
House renovation grants, Departmental circulars 25-6w
Housing starts, Liverpool 119w
Smith houses, Mortgages 117w
Water pollution, Nitrates 166w

Patterson, Mark 208w

Pattie, Mr Geoffrey, Minister of State for Information Technology
Questions
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Privatisation 12w

Pavitt, Mr Laurie
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 368, 373-6
Questions
Business statement 692
Dental amalgam 155w
Homelessness, Brent 16w
Housing capital allocations, Brent 16w
Housing Corporation, Brent 15-6w
India, Immigration applications 60w
Limited list prescribing 414
Nurses, Housing 87w
Pavitt, Laurie, Immigration controls 31-2w

Pavitt, Laurie
Immigration controls 31-2w

Pawsey, Mr J F
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 372-3, 384
Questions
Cement, Imports 44w
Gardiner, J, Members correspondence 335w
Housing benefits, Costs 411
M1, Road accidents 260w
M1, Road construction 260w
M1, Road traffic 76w, 260-1w
M40, Road construction 327w
National insurance contributions 161-3w
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland 670
Railway travel, Railway timetables 302
Road traffic, Motorways 327w
Student loans 111w

Pay deductions 10w

Pay methods
Legislation 181-2w

Pay review bodies 551-2
Teachers 552, 557-8

Pay settlements
Ambulance services 159-60w
District health authorities 200w
Teachers 552

Pay systems
Family doctors 284w

Pedestrian crossings
A6(M) 327w

Pedestrians (15.11.85) 787-848

Pelvic diseases 288-90w
Medical research 288-90w
Young people 288-90w

Pendry, Mr Tom
Questions
Broadcasting, Football 44-5w

Penhaligon, Mr David
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 437

Pensioners
Concessionary fares 296
Housing benefits 148w
Personal savings 410-1

Per capita costs
Unemployment benefits 291w

Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Questions
Dangerous mental patients 110-11

Perry Oaks 70w

Perry Oaks Sludge Works
Heathrow 70w

Personal injury
Northern Ireland 293w

Personal records
Dept of Trade & Industry 306w
Disclosure of information 306-7
Prosecutions 306-7

Personal savings
Inflation 410-1
Pensioners 410-1

Personal social services
Elderly 147w
Expenditure 94w
Local authorities 152w
Local government social services 153w
Northern Ireland 246w

Pesticide residues 163w
Food 163w

Pesticides
Animal experiments 274w
Health hazards 273w
Stubble burning 273w

Peterborough
Hospital waiting lists 412

Peterhead
Prime Minister domestic visits 230w

Peterhead Harbours (South Bay Development) Order Confirmation Bill 1985/86
1R (11.11.85) 295

Peterhead Prison 61w, 223w, 252w
Hospital admissions 252w
Prison discipline 61w
Prison overcrowding 548-9
Prison staff 252w
Prison visits 223w

Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee 286w

Pharmacists
Emergency services 282w
Hospitals 202w
Pay 202w
Recruitment 158w

Pickering, Peter 109-10
Dangerous mental patients 109-10

Picketing
Public order policing (06.11.85) 99-107

Pike, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 707
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 178-82
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (06.11.85) 99-101
Questions
Mobility allowance 153w
State earnings related pension scheme, Womens employment 418
Travel concessions 72w

Pilotage 82w

Piracy
Thailand 195w

Pituitary glands 66-7w, 208w
Cosmetics industry 66-7w
Trade 208w

Planning
Armed forces civilians 84w

Planning appeals 16w
Wales 293-4w

Planning permission
London docklands 120w
Northern Ireland 246w
Roads 685
Wales 293-4w

Plastic bullets
Police 176w

Plutonium
Exports 55w, 59w
Magnox reactors 55w

Poaching
Salmon 5-6w

Points of order
Speakers rulings & statements (11.11.85) 305, (12.11.85) 429, 430, 442, (13.11.85) 563, 647, (14.11.85) 685-6

Police
Cambridgeshire 121w
Manpower 121w
Merseyside 30w
Motorways 304-5
Plastic bullets 176w
Prosecutions 306
Uniform 29w

Police authorities
Road tax 264w

Police cells 251w

Police custody
Children 251w
Scotland 251w

Police equipment
Drinking & driving 244-5w

Police informers
Brass Tacks 123w
Garner, Roy 123w

Police interrogation
Deaf 121-2w
Tape recorded evidence 173w

Police misconduct
Industrial disputes 560

Police national computer
Inquiries 178w

Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 27w, 121-2w

Political doctrines
Magistrates 291-3w

Political parties
Northern Ireland Government 671, 672

Political prisoners
Chile 143w
USSR 234w, 236w, 298w, 299w

Political systems
Chile 235w

Polkemmet
Waste disposal 551

Pollution monitoring
Nitrates 166w

Polytechnics 108w

Port Glasgow (08.11.85) 287-94
Industrial development (08.11.85) 287-94

Porter, Mr Barry
Questions
Business statement 692-3

Portillo, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 638
Questions
Air travel, Europe 76w

Ports
Scotland (11.11.85) 295

Portsmouth
Housing investment programmes 309w
Housing starts 309w
Youth unemployment 302w

Portsmouth Polytechnic 294w
Initial teacher training 294w

Portsmouth & South East Hampshire Health Authority 159-60w

Portugal
VAT 192w

Postal workers
Pay 40-1w

Poverty
Diseases 417

Powell, Rt Hon J Enoch
Debates etc
Private Members time (07.11.85) 120
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 682
Prerogative of mercy, Northern Ireland Government 672
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland 671

Powell, Mr Ray
Debates etc
Prime Ministers question time point of order (14.11.85) 686
Questions
Business statement 689

Powell, Mr William
Questions
Polytechnics 108w

Powley, Mr John
Questions
Africa, Disaster relief 35-6w
District health authorities, East Anglia 412
EC Development Council 183-4w
Gambia, Overseas aid 36w
Overseas Development Administration Shared Scholarship Scheme 36w

Pregnant women
Computer terminals 301w
Dental charges exemptions 334-5w

Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 236-9

Prerogative of mercy
Northern Ireland Government 672

Prescott, Mr John
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 446-7
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 521-6, 529
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (06.11.85) 104, 105

Prescription charges
Non-contributory invalidity pension 280w

Prescription drugs 421-2
Costs 414

Prescriptions
Drugs 413

Press releases
Armed forces 257-8w
Ministry of Defence 257-8w

Prestwick Airport 547-8
Civil defence 547-8

Preventive medicine
Dental services 335w

Pre-trial procedures
Northern Ireland 26w

Price, Sir David
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 701
Questions
European Year of Gardens 297w
"Higher Education Consultation Paper" 267w
Overseas aid, Expenditure 232w

Price increases
British Telecom 45w
Gas tariffs 296w

Prices
Agricultural products 277w

Primary health care
Elderly 215w

Prime Minister domestic visits
Norwich 99w
Open University 100w
Peterhead 230w
Scotland 99w

Prime Minister official engagements 101w, 233w

Prime Minister visits abroad
Africa 232w

Prime Ministers questions
Speakers rulings & statements (12.11.85) 429, 430, (14.11.85) 685-6

Prior, Rt Hon James
Questions
Blundeston Prison, Prison administration 177w

Prison accommodation 237w
Sanitation 237w
Wormwood Scrubs 322-3w

Prison administration
Blundeston Prison 177w
Prison governors 324w

Prison discipline
Peterhead Prison 61w

Prison employment 324w
Wandsworth Prison 320-1w
Wormwood Scrubs 322w

Prison governors 324w
Prison administration 324w

Prison hospitals
Manpower 177w
Nurses 177w

Prison medical services
NHS 177w

Prison overcrowding 237w, 549
Peterhead Prison 548-9
Scotland 548, 549

Prison population 237w

Prison sentences 549
Drug crimes 32w
Operation Julie 32w

Prison staff
Peterhead Prison 252w
Wandsworth Prison 321-2w

Prison visitors
Annual reports 323w
Public appointments 29w

Prison visits
Peterhead Prison 223w

Prisoners
Drug crimes 236w
Drugs 177-8w
Hospital admissions 252w

Prisoners clothing
Wandsworth Prison 319-20w
Wormwood Scrubs 322-3w

Prisoners exercise 321w, 323w
Wandsworth Prison 321w
Wormwood Scrubs 323w

Prisoners home leave 178w

Prisoners mail
Censorship 323w
Open prisons 323w

Prisoners on remand
Prisons 549

Prisoners rights 178w

Prisoners transfers
McCullough, Muriel 177w

Prisons
Crown immunity 176w
Expenditure 238-9w
Greater London 324w
Health & safety executive 176w
Prisoners on remand 549
Public expenditure 548
Youth custody 239w

Private bills (12.11.85) 407-8
Speakers rulings & statements (11.11.85) 295, (14.11.85) 710

Private education
Deaf 267-8w

Private hospitals
Abortion 206-7w

Private Members motions (13.11.85) 574

Private Members time
House of Commons division of time (07.11.85) 120

Private notice questions
Speakers rulings & statements (13.11.85) 567
Trustee savings banks (13.11.85) 568

Private sector
Overseas aid 296-7w

Private sector housing
Flats 215-6w, 220w

Privatisation
British Airports Authority 75w
British Airways 75w
Dockyards 305w, (12.11.85) 463
National Bus Company 70w
Public sector assets 272w, 273w
Railway catering 80w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines 12w, 46w
Shares 225w
Trustee Savings Bank 424
Trustee savings banks 422, 423, 564, 565-6

Probation
Expenditure 238w

Probation hostels 237-8w

Probation & aftercare
Finance 239w

Proctor, Mr K Harvey
Questions
Dartford tunnel, Road construction 83w
Immigration rules, Members 121w
Security, Northern Ireland 679

Procurator fiscal service 86, 8-10w, 172w, 173w

Procurators fiscal 561-2
Evidence 561-2

Procurement
British Rail 71w

Production quotas
Milk 163w
Sugar beet 274-5w

Proof of identity
Supplementary benefits 87w

Property transfer
Local government reform 21w
London boroughs 21w
London Docklands Development Corporation 309-10w
Shares 225w

Prosecutions
Civil service manpower 307
Conditions of employment 307
Director of Public Prosecutions 307-8
Drug crimes 172w, 307, 308
Fraud 305-6
Hospital catering 559
Official Secrets Act 1911 27w
Personal records 306-7
Police 306
Scotland 558-9

Prosthetics 205-6w
Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review 205w, 284w
Expenditure 205w

Protective clothing
Army 257w
Defence procurement 257w

PSV operators licences 263-4w
Charities 263w

Psychogeriatrics
Hampshire 334w
Hospital admissions 334w

Public appointments 234w
BBC 423
Dept of Employment 423
District health authorities 412
Drug industry 414
Greater Manchester Residuary Body 218w
London Residuary Body 217w, 220w
Medical ethics 91w
Merseyside Residuary Body 217w
Prison visitors 29w
Security vetting 100-1w
South Yorkshire Residuary Body 219w
Tyne & Wear Residuary Body 216w
West Midlands Residuary Body 218-9w
West Yorkshire Residuary Body 219w

Public bills (12.11.85) 409

Public buildings
Energy efficiency 226w

Public expenditure
Capital investment 425
Cumbria 671
Dept of the Environment 111-5w
Educational finance 425-6
Housing 61w
Industrial investment 424
Inner city areas 682-3
Northern Ireland 670, 671
Prisons 548
Road works 300
Scotland 550-1
Transport infrastructure 304
Urban programme 682-3, 684

Public expenditure
Health services 160-1w

Public footpaths 220w

Public inquiries
Canary Wharf 120w
Land acquisition 308w
Legionnaries disease 251w
Local government expenditure 146w
M66 79-80w
Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 118w

Public libraries
Expenditure 314-5w

Public order policing
Costs 121w
Industrial disputes 560
Picketing (06.11.85) 99-107

Public participation in planning
Radioactive waste disposal 118w

Public petitions
Gartcosh Steelworks (12.11.85) 535

Public Record Office
Ministerial statements 231w

Public sector assets
English Industrial Estates Corporation 305w
Income 125w
Privatisation 272w, 273w

Public sector housing
Government grants 189w

Public sector housing sales
Scotland 185w

Public telephones
British Telecom (15.11.85) 849-50

Public transport
West Yorkshire 81-2w

Public Works Loan Board
Interest rates 124w

Publicity
Data protection registrar 325w
Drinking & driving 264-5w

Punishment
Alcoholism 560-1

Pupil-teacher ratios
Derbyshire 174w

Pushchairs (Safety) Regulations 1985 (12.11.85) 464

Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 615-9

Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre 221w
Conferences 221w

Queen's speech (06.11.85) 3-5, 11
Addresses to the Crown (06.11.85) 6-11
Economic policy (13.11.85) 575-660
Education (11.11.85) 318-400w
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 465-534
Foreign policy (08.11.85) 220-86
Home office (07.11.85) 121-210
Industry (12.11.85) 465-534
Overseas aid (08.11.85) 220-86
Social services (11.11.85) 318-400w
Speakers rulings & statements (06.11.85) 3, 6, (08.11.85) 262

Questionnaires
Science & Technology research 42w

Quota of handicapped workers 138-9w

Race relations
Health service staff 279w

Racial discrimination
NHS 279w

Radice, Mr Giles
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 389-92

Radio
Hospitals 281w

Radioactive waste disposal 23w
Public participation in planning 118w

Radioactive wastes
Safety measures 128w

RAF Greenham Common 258w
Road accidents 258w

Raffan, Mr Keith
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 170-3, 201
Questions
Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education 11-2w

Railway catering
British Rail 80w
Privatisation 80w
Railway travel 301

Railway electrification
Bournemouth to Weymouth Railway Line 78w

Railway engineering 72-3w, 78-9w

Railway fares
Stoke on Trent 301

Railway network
Manchester Airport 128-9w

Railway timetables 302
British Rail 176w
Railway travel 302

Railway track
Repairs & maintenance 76w

Railway travel 301
Bicycles 301
Railway catering 301
Railway timetables 302

Railway workers
British Railways Board 72w

"Raise the Standard" 268w

Raison, Rt Hon Timothy, Minister of State for Overseas Development
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 240, 281-6
Questions
Africa, Disaster relief 35-6w
Africa, Food aid from EC 34w
Africa, International Fund for Agricultural Development 144w
Africa, Overseas aid 296w
Central America, Bilateral aid 36w
Central America, EC aid 145-6w
Contingency reserve 310
Developing countries, Debts 36w
Development aid, Agriculture 34-5w, 308, 310
Development aid, Lome convention 309
Development aid, Voluntary organisations 34w
EC Development Council 183-4w
Food aid from EC 310
Food aid from UK 296w
Gambia, Overseas aid 36w
Overseas aid 34w, 297w
Overseas aid, Africa 308
Overseas aid, Contingency reserve 309
Overseas aid, Disaster relief 309, 312
Overseas aid, Ethiopia 310
Overseas aid, Overseas trade 35w
Overseas aid, Private sector 296-7w
Overseas Development Administration, Development aid 311-2
Overseas Development Administration Shared Scholarship Scheme 36w
Overseas trade, Africa 309-11
St. Helena, Airports 37w
STABEX, Lome convention 145w
Sudan, Foreign relations 34w
USA, UNESCO 183w

Randall, Mr Stuart
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 438

Rate demands 221w

Rate Demands & Notice of Rates & Percepts Rules 1985 221w

Rate rebates
Scotland 555
Statistics 555

Rate relief 554-5

Rate support grant penalties 146w

Rate support grants
Birmingham City Council 310w
Government grants to local authorities 554-5
Island councils 146w

Rates & rating
Scotland 187w, 554-5, 558

Rathbone, Mr Tim
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 703
Questions
Departmental coordination, Drug abuse 231w
Dept of Transport, Consultants 74w
Drug abuse 100w
Drug advisory committees 148w

Ravenscraig Steelworks
Gartcosh 550

Reagan, President 100w, 196w

Reckless driving 266w

Recruitment
Arts Council 147w
Pharmacists 158w

Recycling
Wastes 165-6w

Redundancy
Dundee 254w
Liverpool City Council 424-5
Local government staff 22w
Merseyside 227w, 228w
Unemployment 227w

Redundancy Payments (Local Government) (Modification) (Amendment) Order 1985 (12.11.85) 464

Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 125

Referenda
Northern Ireland Government 681

"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 92w, 150w, 207-8w, 280w, 410, 418
Housing benefits 410

"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 418

Refugees
Immigration rules 319w
Overseas aid 35-6w

Regents Park 141-2w

Regional aid
EC grants & loans 24w
North West region 426-8
Wales 38w

Regional airports
Investment 71-2w

Regional health authorities
NHS finance 417

Regional investigation teams 180w
Dept of Employment 180w

Rehousing
London boroughs 19-20w

Remand centres
Young offenders 239w

Remand in custody
Crown courts 171w
Greater London 171w

Renton, Mr Tim, *Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*
Questions
ABM Treaty 235w
East Timor, Indonesia 60w
Hong Kong, Ministers visits abroad 57-8w
Indonesia, Human rights 58w
Indonesia, Ministers visits abroad 58w
Libyan Arab Republic, Foreign policy 57w
Nuclear installations, Nuclear safety 195-6w
Nuclear non proliferation treaty 59-60w
Plutonium, Exports 59w
Singapore, Foreign policy 58w
Strategic defence initiative, EC external relations 197w
Thailand, Piracy 195w

Repairs & maintenance
Railway track 76w
Road signs 261w
Roads 300-1
Severn bridge 69-70w

Reparation by offenders 236-7w

Repatriation
Temporary immigrants 178w

Republic of Ireland
Foreign relations 425

Research
Acid rain 18-9w
Aids 149w
Air pollution 18-9w, 22-3w
Land pollution 22-3w

Research finance
Medical Research Council 266-7w
Science & Technology research 108-10w

Residential care of children
Handicapped children 157-8w
Northern Ireland 247w

Residuary bodies 216w, 217w, 218-9w

Resource Allocation Working Party 417
Statistics 417

Restrictive trade practices
Broadcasting 44-5w

Retirement age
Costs 157w
Family doctors 284w

Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas, *Secretary of State for Transport*
Debates etc
Okehampton bypass (Confirmation of Orders) Bill 1985/86
1R (07.11.85) 118
Questions
British Airways, Privatisation 75w
British Rail Engineering 72-3w
Bus crews, pay 298-9
Channel crossing 69w
Channel crossing, Disclosure of information 329w
Dept of Transport, Cash limits 83w
Dept of Transport, Consultants 74w
EC Transport Council, Shipping 75w
London Regional Transport, Transport policy 298, 299
Lorries, Greater London Council 74-5w
Manchester Airport, Railway network 128-9w
"Marine Pilotage Consultation Paper" 82w
Motorways, Lighting 297
Motorways, Speed limits 297-8
M1, Road signs 261w
M25 297
National Bus Company, Privatisation 70w
Orange badge scheme, War pensions 262w
Regional airports, Investment 71-2w
Transport infrastructure, Confederation of British Industry 304
Transport infrastructure, Public expenditure 304

Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 248-50

Rifkind, Mr Malcolm, *Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 712-22
Questions
EC budget, Intervention stocks 198w
COCOM, Exports 298w
COCOM, Technology transfer 297-8w
Commodity agreements 143w
EC reform 198w
International conferences, Geneva 196w
Israel, Arms trade 144w
South Africa, Commonwealth 60w
STABEX, Developing countries 234-5w
USSR, Eruopean Security Conference 235w
Wallenberg, Raoul 143w, 298w, 299w
Wallenberg, Raoul, Death 145w
Wallenberg, Raoul, EC action 236w

Rights of way 220w

Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 627-9, 641

River Thames 80w
Bridges 80w

Road accidents
A127 73w
A140 265w
Buses 328w
Drinking & driving 560-1
M1 260w
M6 304
RAF Greenham Common 258w
Road works 300-1

Road construction
A1(M) 330w
A140 175-6w
A68 60w
A629 74w
A650 74w
Bypasses (07.11.85) 118
Dartford tunnel 83w
Expenditure 74w
Motorways 262w
M1 260w
M25 70-1w
M40 76w, 327w
North Devon link road 81w
Okehampton bypass 329w

Road safety
A1 303, 304
Buses 328w
Motorways 76w, 304
M25 175w

Road safety barriers
A1 303
A12 263w
A38 77-8w
Brentwood bypass 263w

Road safety education 175w

Road signs
M1 261w
Repairs & maintenance 261w

Road tax
Caravans 129w
Local authorities 264w
Police authorities 264w

Road traffic
A11 127w
A140 265w
B197 127w
Lorries 297
Motorways 327w
M1 76w, 260-1w

Road traffic control
Greater London 81w
Lorries 74-5w
Motorways 78w
M1 78w, 79w
M25 79w
Roundabouts 74w

Road traffic offences
Fixed penalties 1w
Motorcycles 330w
Transport Act 1982 1w

Road works
Finance 262-3w
Greater London 262-3w
Local government expenditure 299-300
Midland link motorways 329w
Motorways 73w, 300
M25 77w
Public expenditure 300
Road accidents 300-1

Roads
Barton Mills 326w
Greater London 70w
Lighting 259-60w
Local government reform 81w
Lothian (11.11.85) 295
Planning permission 685
Repairs & maintenance 300-1
Rural areas 299-300
South West region 685

Roberts, Mr Allan
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 122, 149, 152-8
Questions
Business statement 116
Local government staff, Liverpool City Council 94w

Roberts, Mr Wyn, *Under-Secretary of State for Wales*
Debates etc
Singleton Hosptal, Casualty unit (14.11.85) 782-6
Questions
Amey Roadstone, Welsh Office 37w
Day care of children, Wales 211-2w
Geriatric patients, Wales 215w
Geriatrics, Wales 212-6w
Health service staff, Wales 210-2w
Local authorities, Welsh language 38w
Local government staff, Wales 39w
Music therapy, Wales 210w
Nature reserves, Wales 127w

NHS, Wales 38-40w
Welsh language, Languages education 209w

Robertson, Mr George
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 277-81
Questions
Meningitis, Lanarkshire Health Board 61-2w
Meningitis, Scotland 61w, 62-3w

Robinson, Mr Peter
Questions
Anglo-Irish agreement 669-70
Anglo-Irish talks 671-2, 675, 681
Business statement 689-90

Rogers, Mr Allan
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 649

Rolling stock
British rail 68w
London to Weymouth railway line 68w

Rolls-Royce Aeroengines
Privatisation 12w, 46w

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 440
Questions
Business statement 695-6
Defective housing, Government grants to local authorities 119w
Housing starts, Liverpool 119w
Midland link motorways, Road works 329w
Tax allowances, Tenants cooperatives 685

Ross, Mr Ernie
Questions
Company liquidations, Dundee 254w
Employment schemes, Dundee 253-4w
Housing finance, Dundee 190w
Scottish Urban Programme, Dundee 550
Unemployment, Dundee 253w
Unemployment benefits, Per capita costs 291w
Vacancies, Dundee 253-4w
Youth training scheme 190w
Youth unemployment, Dundee 252-3w

Ross, Mr Stephen
Debates etc
Oral question time point of order (11.11.85) 305, 312
Road safety (15.11.85) 794, 804-7
Questions
Africa, Food aid from EC 34w
Africa, Overseas aid 296w
Channel crossing, Upper Waiting Hall 84w
Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland, Government grants 246w
International conferences, Geneva 196w
National Bus Company, Privatisation 70w
World Cup, Northern Ireland 681

Ross, Mr William
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 672-3, 677
Salmon, Northern Ireland 245w

Rossi, Sir Hugh
Questions
Direct labour departments, Haringey 19w

Ross, Kenneth 123w
Criminal investigation 123w

Rost, Mr Peter
Questions
A1 M, Hatfield 330w
Okehampton bypass, Road construction 329w

Rosyth Dockyard 84-5w
Asbestos 84-5w

Rotherhithe tunnel 80w

Roundabouts
Road traffic control 74w

Royal Fine Arts Commission 23w

Royal Signals & Radar Establishment 84w

Royal Ulster Constabulary
Northern Ireland Government 680

Rumbold, Mrs Angela, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment*
Questions
Acid rain, Research 18-9w
Acid rain, Trees 17-8w
Air pollution, Research 22-3w
Commissions for Local Administration 24w
Direct labour departments, Haringey 19w
Local government functions, Birmingham City Council 310w
Local government functions, Local government reform 310w
Local government reform, Waste disposal 20w
Local government staff 24w
Radioactive waste disposal 23w
Radioactive waste disposal, Public participation in planning 118w
Rate demands 221w
Rights of way 220w
Rural areas 119-20w
Waste disposal, Greater London 221w
Wastes, Recycling 165-6w

Rural areas 119-20w
Roads 299-300

Ryder, Mr Richard
Questions
Nationalised industries, Legislation 316w

Ryman, Mr John
Debates etc
Matthew Brown, Monopolies & Mergers Commission reports (13.11.85) 573
Trustee savings banks, Private notice question (13.11.85) 563, 568
Questions
Business statement 694
Prosecutions, Drug crimes 308

Sackville, Mr Tom
Questions
Air safety 69w
Regional aid, North West region 426-8

Safety
Cinemas 122w

Safety measures
Air safety 82w
Radioactive wastes 128w

Safety standards
Asbestos 138w

Salmon
Fish conservation 276w
Legislation 1w
North East coast drift fishery 276w
Northern Ireland 245w
Poaching 5-6w
Scotland 1w

Salmonella
Stanley Royd Hospital 93w

Sanitation
Prison accommodation 237w
Wandsworth Prison 319-20w

School buildings
Construction 173-4w
North West region 173-4w

School choice
Appeals 107w
Parents rights 294w

School governors
Omagh District Council 95w
Strabane District Council 95w

School holidays 142w

School leaving
Take-up of employment 302w
Youth employment 302-4w

School meals
Child care 9-10w

School teachers
Conditions of employment 553
Industrial arbitration 552-3

Science education
Educational standards 294-5w

Science & technology research
Questionnaires 42w
Research finance 108-10w

Scotland (12.11.85) 464
Agency nurses 251w
Agricultural advisory services 186-7w, 188w, 254-6w
Agricultural policy 547
Agricultural research 188w
Agriculture 184-5w, 189w
Amphetamines 65w
Average earnings 65w
Crown immunity 559
Doctors list of patients 186w
Drug abuse 63w, 65w, 187w
Drug crimes 65w, 172w
Employment opportunities 550
Farm capital grants scheme 555-6
Farmers 546
Health service staff 312-4w
Higher education 312w
Hill livestock allowances 547
Housing 61w, (14.11.85) 711
Inflation 550
Iron & steel industry 190w, 550
Legal aid 189w
List D schools 252w
Local government staff 66w
Manufacturing industries 63w, 66w
Marginal land 545-6
Meningitis 61w, 62-3w
Police custody 251w
Ports (11.11.85) 295
Prime Minister domestic visits 99w
Prison overcrowding 548, 549
Prosecutions 558-9
Public expenditure 550-1
Public sector housing sales 185w
Rate rebates 555
Rates & rating 187w, 554-5, 558
Salmon 1w
Service industries 64w
Severe weather payments 545-6, 547, 555-6
Tape recorded evidence 173w
Teachers 187-8w, 551-2, 552-3, 554, 556-7, 557-8
Transient people 172w
Unemployment 253w, 549-50
Unruly children 86 8-10w
Warrant sales 172w
Womens employment 64w
Youth training scheme 313-4w

Scott, Mr Nicholas, *Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 671-2
Crozier, Fred, Members correspondence 95-6w
Libraries, Northern Ireland 95w
Local authorities in Northern Ireland, Sinn Fein 677-8
Northern Ireland Assembly, Devolution 672
Northern Ireland Assembly, Elections 671, 672
Northern Ireland Government 679
Northern Ireland Government, Extradition 678-9
Northern Ireland Government, Referenda 681
School governors, Omagh District Council 95w

Scott Lithgow (08.11.85) 287-94

Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux 305w

Scottish Council 186w

Scottish Council (Development & Industry) 186w

Scottish Development Agency
Civil service manpower 251w

Scottish Office
Amey Roadstone 61w
Cash limits 66w

Scottish Prison Officers Association 252w

Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council 312w

Scottish Trades Union Congress 186w, 187w, 549-50
Economic situation 549-50

Scottish Urban Programme
Dundee 550

Scottish & Newcastle Breweries 194w, (13.11.85) 569-73
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 194w

Screening
Blood 147-8w
Cervical cancer 154w

Sea containers 84w

Sealink
Mergers 45w

Security
Anglo-Irish talks 679-80
9 Signal Regiment 99w
Northern Ireland 245w, 679-80

Security vetting
British Telecom 231-2w
House of Commons staff 66w
Public appointments 100-1w

Sedgemore, Mr Brian
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 255-63
Sedgemore, Brian, Members conduct (11.11.85) 313, 314

Sedgemore, Brian (11.11.85) 313-6

Self-employed 51w

Service industries
Manpower 64w
Scotland 64w
Wales 211-2w

Setspace 160w

Severe disablment allowance 157w

Severe weather payments 93w, 154w, 155w, 545, 555-6
Scotland 545-6, 547, 555-6

Severn bridge
Repairs and maintenance 69-70w

Sex discrimination
Northern Ireland 246w

Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 246w

Shares
Privatisation 225w
Property transfer 225w

Shaw, Mr Giles, *Minister of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 151
Question
Cable television, Northern Ireland 322w
Cinemas, Handicapped 31w, 122w
Civil defence, Welwyn & Hatfield District Council 120-1w
Clement, Harry, Interviews 123w
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 121w
Drinking & driving, Convictions 245w
Extradition, Cross border cooperation in Ireland 177w
Garner, Roy, "Brass Tacks" 123w
Garner, Roy, Costs 178w
Garner, Roy, Police informers 123w
Garner, Roy, Television programmes 178w
Metropolitan Police, Expenditure 317-8w
Police, Cambridgeshire 121w
Police, Merseyside 30w
Police, Plastic bullets 176w
Police, Uniforms 29w
Police informers, Brass Tacks 123w
Police interrogation, Deaf 121-2w
Police national computer, Inquiries 178w
Sub post offices, Suffolk 244w

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 643, 647
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 341
Road safety (15.11.85) 817-21
Questions
British Rail Engineering 78w
Community programme, Take-up of employment 137w
Drinking & driving, Christmas 129w
School leaving, Youth employment 302-4w
Training 137-8w
Unemployment 137w
Youth training scheme 133-4w
Youth training scheme, Accidents 134-6w, 137-8w
Youth training scheme, Conditions of employment 134w
Youth training scheme, Training 133w
Youth training scheme, Vacancies 133w

Sheffield
Telephone tapping 324w

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 702-3
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 436
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 608-11

Shelton, Mr William
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 147-52

Shersby, Mr Michael
Questions
Blood plasma 422

Shetland Islands Council 146w

Shipbuilding
John W McKay 309w

Shipping
EC Transport Council 75w

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 640-5

Short, Ms Clare
Debates etc
Temporary immigrants (11.11.85) 314
Questions
Community Programme 181w
Employment 132-4w
Pay, Low pay 180-2w
Unemployment 132w
Wages councils, Minimum wage 301w
Youth training scheme, Age 133w

Short, Mrs Renee
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 706
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 353-6
Questions
Contraceptives, Young people 414-5
Urban planning, Metropolitan counties 221-2w
West Midlands light rapid transit system 264w

Sick leave
Unemployment 227w

Sick pay 417

Sickness benefits 417

Silentnight
Industrial disputes (06.11.85) 99-107

Silkin, Rt Hon John
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 497-8

Silvester, Mr Fred
Questions
Ministers domestic visits, Manchester University 423

Sims, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 706
Questions
Aids 149w
Import controls, Greece 192w
Profits, Greece 192w
VAT, Portugal 192w

Singapore
Foreign policy 58w
Ministers visits abroad 57-8w

Single women
Unemployment 229w

Singleton Hospital (14.11.85) 779-86

Sinn Fein 677
Local authorities in Northern Ireland 677-8
Terrorism 678

Sitting tenants 118w

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 443
Matthew Brown, Monopolies & Mergers Commission reports (13.11.85) 572
Sedgemore, Brian, Members conduct (11.11.85) 314
Trustee savings banks, Private notice question (13.11.85) 568
Trustee savings banks, Prime Ministers questions (12.11.85) 430
Questions
Business statement 114-5, 697
Fraud, City of London 305-6
Supplementary benefits disregards of income 151w

Skoal Bandits 200w

Small businesses
Accounts 129w
Bureaucracy 138w
Confederation of British Industry 426
Employment opportunities 130w, 426
Insolvency 130w
Statistics 130w

Smith Committee see Resource Allocation Working Party

Smith houses 117w
Mortgages 117w

Smith, Mr Chris
Questions
Business statement 697
Control orders, Housing Act 1964 308w
"Home Improvement Consultation Paper" 308w

Smith, Mr Cyril
Questions
Family practitioner committees, Disclosure of information 278w
NHS complaints, North West region 278w

Smith, Sir Dudley
Questions
Aids, Blood transfusions 198-9w
Black economy, Costs 195w
Foetal tissue, Cosmetics industry 198w
Independent prosecution service, Conditions of employment 170-1w
Limited list prescribing 152w
Motorways, Road safety 76w
M45, Lighting 259w
Water pollution, Nitrates 166w

Smith, Rt Hon John
Debates etc
Matthew Brown, Monopolies & Mergers Commission reports (13.11.85) 569-70
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 465-75, 478, 483-4

Smuggling
Drugs 307

Smyth, Rev Martin
Questions
Blind, Computers 278w
Business statement 692
Cosmetic Products (Safety) Regulations 1984, Celaton Laboratory Research 28w
Cosmetics industry, Foetal tissue 43-4w
Foetal tissue, Celaton Laboratory Research 91w
Foetal tissue, Codes of practice 91w
Foetal tissue, Trade 91w, 208w
Health services, Northern Ireland 669
Juries, Northern Ireland 293w
Medical ethics, Public appointments 91w
Personal social services, Northern Ireland 246w
Private hospitals, Abortion 206-7w
Public libraries, Expenditure 314-5w
VAT, Human organs 66-7w, 316w

Snape, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Road safety (15.11.85) 795-801, 810, 823, 847
Questions
British Rail, Procurement 71w
Railway timetables 302

Soames, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 722, 731, 757-61, 764
Questions
ABM Treaty 235w
Apprentices, Government assistance to industry 130w
Business statement 690
EUREKA 225w
European monetary system 316w
Exchange rates, Exchange control 316-7w
Law enforcement 243w
Overseas aid, Disaster relief 309
Science education, Educational standards 294-5w
Urban development grants 15w
Urban housing renewal unit 116w
USSR, European Security Conference 235w

Social Fund 150w
Social security reviews 150w, 419

Social security abuse
Board & lodging charges 420-1
Civil service manpower 180w

Social security benefits 155w
Huyton 160w
Local government staff 94w
Social security reviews 151w
Students 151w

Social security benefits disqualification
Availability for work 229w
Child benefit 149w

Social security benefits rates
Child benefit 283-4w
Supplementary benefits 280w

Social security benefits reductions
Housing benefits 410-11, 411

Social security benefits rules
Students 287-8w
Unemployment benefits 229w

Social security claims
Housing benefits 159w

Social security recipients
Fees & charges 419
Invalidity benefits 200w
Non-contributory invalidity pension 157w, 280w

Social security reviews 92w, 140-2w, 150w, 151w, 152-3w, 207-8w, 410w, 418, 419
Social Fund 150w, 419
Social security benefits 151w

Social services
Queen's speech (11.11.85) 318-400w

Social Services Select Committee 150w

"Social Services Select Committee on Mental Health Community Care" 150w

Soil pollution 22-3w

Soley, Mr Clive
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 150, 154, 183
Questions
Pickering, Peter, Dangerous mental patients 109-10
Wormwood Scrubs, Prison accommodation 322-3w
Wormwood Scrubs, Prison employment 322w
Wormwood Scrubs, Prisoners exercise 323w

South Africa
Barber, Lord 60w
Commonwealth 60w

South Bank 147w
Local government staff 147w

South East region
National income 45-6w

South West region
Roads 685

South West Thames Regional Health Authority 285-6w

South Yorkshire Residuary Body 219w
Public appointments 219w

Spain 57w
Construction materials 191w
Gibraltar 57w

Speaker and his deputies, *For rulings and statements see separate heading Speakers rulings & statements*
Debates etc
Amendments & new clauses (13.11.85) 575, (14.11.85) 712
Disallowed questions (11.11.85) 304, (12.11.85) 412, (14.11.85) 680
Procedure (06.11.85) 11, (11.11.85) 379, (12.11.85) 441, 442, (13.11.85) 645
Standing Order No 10 applications, Trustee savings banks (12.11.85) 463

Speakers rulings & statements
Business questions (14.11.85) 696
Business statement (07.11.85) 115
Calling of Members (11.11.85) 312, (12.11.85) 442, (13.11.85) 563, (14.11.85) 685-6, 696
House of Commons debates (06.11.85) 6, (11.11.85) 317, (12.11.85) 465
Members attendance (12.11.85) 461, 462
Members conduct (06.11.85) 11, (13.11.85) 645
Members correspondence (07.11.85) 118
Members interventions (12.11.85) 480
Members speeches (07.11.85) 173, (08.11.85) 262, (11.11.85) 317, (12.11.85) 465, (13.11.85) 575, 604, 627, 645
Members suspension (11.11.85) 313-6
Ministerial statements (12.11.85) 441, 442, 443, 457, (13.11.85) 570, 574, 661
Official Report (12.11.85) 461, 462
Oral questions (11.11.85) 312, (13.11.85) 563, (14.11.85) 698
Points of order (11.11.85) 305, (12.11.85) 429, 430, 442, (13.11.85) 563, 647, (14.11.85) 685-6
Prime Ministers questions (12.11.85) 429, 430, (14.11.85) 685-6
Private bills (11.11.85) 295, (14.11.85) 710
Private notice questions (13.11.85) 567
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 3, 6, (08.11.85) 262
Sub judice (13.11.85) 568
Unparliamentary expressions (13.11.85) 586

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 720, 732, 744-9
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 285
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 392
Questions
Bus crews, Pay 298-9
London Docklands Development Corporation, Compulsory purchase 308w
Overseas aid, Disaster relief 312
Taxicards, Greater London 261w

Special educational needs 268w

Special hospitals
Dangerous mental patients 287w

Special schools
Deaf 267-8w

Speech impaired
Aids for handicapped 86w

Speed governors (15.11.85) 787-848

Speed limits
Buses 176w
Motorways 297-8

Speller, Mr Tony
Questions
Local government expenditure, Road works 299-300
North Devon link road, Road construction 81w
Planning permission, Roads 685

Spence, Mr John
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 32-4
Questions
Business statement 688-9

Spencer, Mr Derek
Questions
Bus services, Competition 81w
Social security reviews 152-3w

Spicer, Mr Jim
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 261, 269-71

Spicer, Mr Michael *Under-Secretary of State for Transport*
Questions
Air routes, Australia 265w
Air safety 69w
Air safety, Aircraft seats 82w
Air safety, Safety measures 82w
Air traffic, Greater London 76w
Air travel, Europe 76w
Aviation fuels, Fire prevention 174w
British Airports Authority, Privatisation 75w
Buses, Driving tests 263w
Driving, Medical examinations 174-5w
Driving licences, Buses 263-4w
Manchester Airport, Management 72w
Perry Oaks Sludge Works, Heathrow 70w
Road tax, Police authorities 264w

Spinal Injuries Association 31w
Cinemas 31w

Sports Council
Government grants 222-3w

Springburn
British Rail Engineering 78-9w

Squire, Mr Robin
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 615
Questions
Channel crossing, Upper Waiting Hall 84w
Child benefit 149w
London Regional Transport, Transport policy 299

St Helena
Airports 37w

St James Hospital
Wandsworth 153w

St Marys Hospital
Hampton 421

St Marys Hospital, Portsmouth 159-60w

STABEX
Developing countries 234-5w

EC action 234-5w
Lome convention 145w

Staff Commission 22w

Stafford
Legionnaires disease 415-6

Stanbrook, Mr Ivor
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks, Northern Ireland Government 674-5

Standard of living
Economic recession 419

Standing charges 295w

Standing Order No 6 (07.11.85) 120

Standing Order No 10 applications
Trustee savings banks (12.11.85) 463

Standing Order No 24 (11.11.85) 313-6

Standing Order No 31 (12.11.85) 407-8

Stanley, Rt Hon John, *Minister of State for the Armed Forces*
Questions
Armed forces civilians, Planning 84w
Armed forces dependents, Parental contributions 142w
Armed forces pensions 140-2w
Armed forces pensions, Bombings 141-2w
Armed forces pensions, Costs 141w
Armed forces pensions, Defence expenditure 141w
Armed services youth training scheme 257w
Boyle, Lt Col 83w
Cruise missiles 257w
Cruise missiles, Armed forces deployment 307w
Lines of Communication Agreement 83w
Military aircraft, Airlines 307w
Ministry of Defence, Cash limits 85w
NATO, Armed forces deployment 84w
RAF Greenham Common, Road accidents 258w
Trident submarines, Trident missiles 307w
War casualties, Korea 307w

Stanley Royd Hospital 93w
Salmonella 93w

State earnings related pension scheme 140-2w, 148w
Manual workers 418
Occupational pensions 419-20
Womens employment 418

Stateless persons
Deportation 320w

Statutory Instruments Joint Select Committee (12.11.85) 407

Statutory Instruments Select Committee (12.11.85) 407

Stay low campaign 129w

Steel, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 25-32
Trustee savings banks, Prime Ministers questions (12.11.85) 429
Questions
A68, Road construction 60w
Community hospitals 421
Iran, Arms exports 232w
List D schools, Scotland 252w
Trustee savings banks, Privatisation 423, 566
Veterinary services, Lasswade 197-8w

Steen, Mr Anthony
Questions
A38, Road safety barriers 77-8w

Stern, Mr Michael
Questions
Hospital catering, Food hygiene 416
Regional airports, Investment 71-2w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Privatisation 12w

Stevens, Mr Lewis
Questions
Local government, Legislation 310w

Stevens, Mr Martin
Questions
EC Steel Council 46-7w

Stewart, Mr Allan, *Under-Secretary of State for Scotland*
Questions
British Steel Corporation, Gartcosh 184w
Company liquidations, Dundee 254w
Employment schemes, Dundee 253-4w
Further education colleges, Educational finance 185w
Scottish Council (Development & Industry) 186w
Scottish Development Agency, Civil service manpower 251w
Scottish Trades Union Congress 187w
Teachers, Pay 186w
Teachers, Scotland 187-8w, 556-7, 557-8
Unemployment, Dundee 253w
Vacancies, Dundee 253-4w
Youth training scheme 190w
Youth unemployment, Dundee 252-3w

Stewart, Mr Andy
Debates etc
Darfield Main colliery (12.11.85) 541
Employment schems (12.11.85) 455-6

Stewart, Rt Hon Donald
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 239-42, 282
Trustees savings banks, Private notice question (13.11.85) 563, 567
Questions
Freight transport 69w
Severe weather payments 155w
Severe weather payments, Scotland 546
Trustee Savings Bank, Privatisation 424
Western Isles Integrated Development Programme 186w

Stewart, Mr Ian, *Economic Secretary to the Treasury*
Questions
Banks, Africa 272w
Building societies, Legislation 3-4w
Henry Ansbacher, Banks 124w
Public Works Loan Board, Interest rates 124w
Trustee Savings Bank, Privatisation 564, 565-6
Trustees savings banks, Ownership 566-7

Stockport bypass 327w

Stoke on Trent
Railway fares 301

Stokes, Mr John
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 517-20
Questions
Business statement 694

Stott, Mr Roger
Questions
Travel concessions, Greater Manchester 297

Strabane District Council 95w
School governors 95w

Strang, Mr Gavin
Questions
Teachers, Scotland 188w, 553
Youth unemployment, Drug abuse 683

Strategic defence initiative
Defence research 257w
EC external relations 197w
European Commission 291w

Strathclyde
Drug crimes 184w

Straw, Mr Jack
Debates etc
Matthew Brown, Monopolies & Mergers Commission reports (13.11.85) 571
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (06.11.85) 101-3, 104, 105
Questions
Matthew Brown, Takeovers 194w

Stubble burning 273w
Pesticides 273w

Students
Deeds of Covenant 287-8w
Loans 111w
Social security benefits 151w
Social security benefits rules 287-8w
Unemployment 228w

Sub judice
Speakers rulings & statements (13.11.85) 568

Sub post offices
Criminal investigation 244w
Suffolk 244w

Subsidies
Council tenants 15w
Owner occupied housing 15w

Successor authorities 22w
Local government staff 22w

Sudan
Foreign relations 34w

Suffolk
Sub post offices 244w

Sugar beet
Bioengineering 275w
Food 275w
Production quotas 274-5w

Summary trial
Crown courts 319w

Summer Time Order 1985 (11.11.85) 316

Summertime 243w

Sunday trading 683-4

Supplementary Benefit (Requirements & Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985 151w

Supplementary Benefit (Requirements & Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions (No 2) Regulations 1985 (11.11.85) 318-400w

Supplementary Benefit (Resources) Amendment (No 3) Regulations 1985 287-8w

Supplementary benefits
Availability for work 88w
Board & lodging charges 91-2w, 94w, 150w, 420
Coventry 151w
Proof of identity 87w
Social security benefits rates 280w

Supplementary benefits disregards of income 151w

Surgery
Manchester 283w

Tachographs
Buses 75w, 263w

Takeovers
Chicago Pacific 194w
Matthew Brown 194w
The Observer 43-4w

Take-up of employment
Community programme 137w
School leaving 302w

Tape recorded evidence
Police interrogation 173w
Scotland 173w

Tapsell, Sir Peter
Questions
Business statement 114

Tax allowances
Tenants cooperatives 685

Tax assessment appeals
District tax offices 315-6w

Tax yields
Income tax 124-5w
VAT 124-5w

Taxation
Alcoholic drinks 192w

Audio equipment 44w
Video equipment 44w

Taxicards
Greater London 261w, 302-3
Greater London Council 71w

Taxis
Licensing 82w

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 246w, 669
Local authorities in Northern Ireland, Sinn Fein 677-8

Taylor, Mr John Mark
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 468
Questions
Midland link motorways 71w
Northern Ireland Assembly, Devolution 672
Overseas aid, Disaster relief 309
Private sector housing, Flats 215-6w
Sick pay 417
Travel concessions, West Midlands 296

Taylor, Mr Teddy
Debates etc
EC budget (14.11.85) 718, 720, 736, 750, 753-7, 762, 776
Questions
EC budget, Agriculture 311-2w
EC budget, Intervention stocks 276w
EC budget, UK contributions 272w
Channel crossing 69w
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 276-7w
European Communities, Expenditure 271-2w
Intervention stocks, EC budget 276w

Teacher training 294w
General Certificate of Secondary Education 106-7w, 268-9w

Teachers
Conditions of employment 553-4
Industrial arbitration 556-7, 558
Industrial disputes 188w, 269w, 553
Pay 186w, 551-2, 553-4
Pay review bodies 552, 557-8
Pay settlements 552
Scotland 187-8w, 551-2, 552-3, 554, 556-7, 557-8

Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 435

Technical assistance
Disaster relief 312

Technology transfer
COCOM 297-8w
Defence 194w
USA 194w

Telephone systems
Data protection registrar 325-6w

Telephone tapping
Sheffield 324w

Television
Falkland Islands 58w

Television programmes
Garner, Roy 178w

Telford College 185w

Temple-Morris, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 252-5

Temporary immigrants
Bangladesh 179w
Repatriation 178w

Tenants cooperatives
Tax allowances 685

Tenders 77-8w, 101w, 154w
NHS 154w

Terrorism
Northern Ireland 245w
Northern Ireland Government 673-4, 675, 680
Sinn Fein 678

Testing
Trident 139-40w

Textiles
Industrial training schemes 224-5w

Thailand
Piracy 195w

Thamesmead
Council housing 424
Elections 424

Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister of the Civil Service
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 11-8
Questions
Abbeystead pumping station, Explosions 423
Agricultural products, EC internal trade 47-8w
Arms control treaties 100w
Anglo-Irish talks 231w, 681, 682, 683
Anglo-Irish talks, Unparliamentary expressions 683
British citizenship, Northern Ireland 425
COCOM, UK contributions 233w
Confederation of British Industry, Small businesses 426
Council housing, Thamesmead 424
Criminal injuries compensation, Bombings 682
Crown immunity, Hospitals 426
Departmental coordination, Drug abuse 231w
Departmental coordination, Overseas aid 232w
Dept of Employment, Public appointments 423
Drug abuse 100w
EUREKA, Finance 48w
European Convention on Human Rights 684-5
Government Communication Headquarters, Kane, Jock 99-101w
High technology, USA 233w
Imports, Unfair competition 231w
Iran, Arms exports 232w
Iron & steel industry, Mexico 47w
Johnson Matthey 424-5
Joseph, Keith, Dismissal 100w
Ministerial statements, Civil servants 100w
Ministerial statements, Public Record Office 231w
Ministers domestic visits, Manchester University 423
9 Signal Regiment, Security 99w
Official secrets, Cyprus 682
Overseas aid 101w, 233w
Overseas aid, Expenditure 232w
Planning permission, Roads 685
Prime Minister domestic visits, Norwich 99w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Open University 100w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Peterhead 230w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Scotland 99w
Prime Minister official engagements 101w, 233w
Prime Minister visits abroad, Africa 232w
Public appointments 234w
Public appointments, Security vetting 100-1w
Public expenditure, Capital investment 425
Public expenditure, Educational finance 425-6
Public expenditure, Industrial investment 424
Regional aid, North West region 426-8
Security vetting, British Telecom 231-2w
Strategic defence initiative, European Commission 291w
Sunday trading 683-4
Tax allowances, Tenants cooperatives 685
Trustee savings banks, Privatisation 422, 423, 424
Unemployment 231w
Unemployment benefits, Per capita costs 291w
Urban programme, Public expenditure 682-3, 684
Wallenberg, Raoul 234w
Wars, Legislation 48w
World Cup, Northern Ireland 681
Youth unemployment, Drug abuse 683
Youth unemployment, Northern region 684

Theft
Civil servants 2-3w

Theodorou, Marina 326w
Work permits 326w

Thomas, Dr Roger
Questions
Limited list prescribing, Oral mucolytics 413

Thompson, Mr Jack
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 387-9

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 95, 96
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 345, 385-7
Questions
British Rail, Capital investment 75w
Burnham Committee 2w
General Certificate of Secondary Education 267w
Hospital waiting lists, East Anglia 412
Imports, Unfair competition 231w
International Youth Year, Government grants 48w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Norwich 99w
Young people, Contraception 336w

Thorne, Mr Stan
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 613-5
Questions
British Railways Board, Railway workers 72w
Economic recession, Standard of living 419
Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee 286w

Thornton, Mr Malcolm
Questions
Air routes, Australia 265w

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 458
Queen's speech, Social services (11.11.85) 371
Questions
Development aid, Voluntary organisations 34w
Handicapped children, Residential care of children 157-8w
Motorways, Road safety 304

Titford viaduct 329w
Elevated sections of motorways 329w

Torney, Mr Thomas
Questions
Business statement 691

Townend, Mr John
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 438
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 459
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 620, 621-4

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 88-9

Toxocara canis 334w
Children 334w

Toxocariasis 334w

Tracey, Mr Richard Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment

Questions
County Hall 221w
County Hall, Listed buildings 221w
Established use certificates 16-7w
Greater Manchester Residuary Body, Disclosure of information 218w
Greater Manchester Residuary Body, Public appointments 218w
Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission, Civil service manpower 20w
Local government expenditure, Brent & Harrow Engineering Group Training Association 120w
Local government expenditure, Houslow Engineering Group Training Association 120w
Local government reform, Greater London Council 119w
Local government reform, Lea Valley Regional Park Authority 222w
Local government reform, Local government staff 21w, 22w, 118-9w, 165w, 223w
Local government staff, Greater London Council 22w
London Residuary Body, Public appointments 217w, 220w
Merseyside Residuary Body, Public appointments 217w
Osborne House 222w
Planning appeals 16w
Property transfer, London boroughs 21w
South Yorkshire Residuary Body, Public appointments 219w
Sports Council, Government grants 222-3w
Tyne & Wear Residuary Body, Public appointments 216w
Urban planning, Metropolitan counties 221-2w
West Midlands Residuary Body, Public appointments 218-9w
West Yorkshire Residuary Body, Public appointments 219w

Trade
Foetal tissue 91w, 208w
Pituitary glands 208w

Trade union membership
Joint speech research unit 84w

Trade union rule books 49-50w

Trade union rules 49-50w

Traffic forecasting 260-1w
M1 260-1w

Trafford Health Authority (11.11.85) 401-6

Training 137-8w
Health visitors 280w
Youth training scheme 133w

Training awards schemes
Industrial design 224-5w

Training workshops 230w
Moss Side 230w

Transient people
Scotland 172w

Transplant surgery
Hospital beds 201-2w
Hospital waiting lists 201-2w
Hospitals 200-2w
Kidneys 158-9w
Liver diseases 200-2w
NHS finance 201-2w

Transport Act 1982 1w
Road traffic offences 1w

Transport Act 1985 72w, 295-6
Travel concessions 295-6

Transport infrastructure
Capital investment 304
Confederation of British Industry 304
Public expenditure 304

Transport of hazardous materials 128w

Transport policy
London Regional Transport 298, 299

"Transport Select Committee on Road Safety" (15.11.85) 787-848

Travel concessions 72w, 296
Greater Manchester 297
Transport Act 1985 295-6
West Midlands 296

Travel documents 319-20w

Treaty of Rome 198w

Trees
Acid rain 17-8w, 63w

Trent Regional Health Authority 199-200w
Capital investment 199-200w

Trials
Administrative delays 26w
Drug crimes 172w
Evidence 561-2
Juries 27w
Official secrets 28w, 83w, 99w

Trident
Testing 139-40w

Trident submarines
Trident missiles 307w

Trippier, Mr David, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment*
Debates etc
Silentnight, Industrial disputes (06.11.85) 103-7
Questions
Apprentices, Government assistance to industry 130w
Business, EC law 138w
Small businesses, Accounts 129w
Small businesses, Employment opportunities 130w
Small businesses, Insolvency 130w
Small businesses, Statistics 130w
Training 137-8w
Training workshops, Moss Side 230w
Youth training scheme 133-4w
Youth training scheme, Accidents 134-6w, 137-8w
Youth training scheme, Age 133w
Youth training scheme, Conditions of employment 134w
Youth training scheme, Greater Manchester 230w
Youth training scheme, Training 133w
Youth training scheme, Vacancies 133w
Youth training scheme, Voluntary organisations 229-30w

Truck Acts 181-2w

Trustee savings banks
Appeals 564-5, 566
Judgments 422, 423, 424, 564, 565, 566
Ownership 566-7
Private Notice Questions (13.11.85) 568
Privatisation 422, 423, 424, 564, 565-6
Standing Order No 10 applications (12.11.85) 463

Trustee Savings Banks Bill 1984/85 422

Tuition fees
Overseas students 173w

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
British Airports Authority, Privatisation 75w

2,4-D 273w

Tyne Bridge
By election writs (12.11.85) 407

Tyne & Wear Residuary Body
Public appointments 216w

Uganda
Compensation 196-7w

Ulster Agriculture Organisation Society 245-6w
Government grants 245-6w

Unemployment 132w, 137w, 231w, (13.11.85) 575-660
Birkenhead 52-4w
Dundee 253-4w
Greenock (08.11.85) 287-94
Handicapped workers 227w
Health 417
Holiday leave 228w
Knowsley 302w
Merseyside 302w
Mid Glamorgan 37w
Northern Ireland 670
Redundancy 227w
Scotland 253w, 549-50
Sick leave 227w
Single women 229w
Students 228w
Wales 37w
Wandsworth 49w

Unemployment benefits
Age 227-8w
Per capita costs 291w
Social security benefits rules 229w

UNESCO
USA 183w

Unfair competition
Imports 231w

Uniforms 29w
Police 29w

Unit trusts
EC action 193w

Unitary taxation 124w

United Nations
Drug crimes 123w
Overseas aid 297w

United Nations Association 297w
Government grants 297w

United Nations Association Youth Council 297w

Unparliamentary expressions
Anglo-Irish talks 683
Speakers rulings & statements (13.11.85) 586

Unruly children
Scotland 86 8-10w

Upper Waiting Hall
Channel crossing 84w, 326w
Heart diseases 282w

Urban areas
Crop spraying 56-7w
Northern Ireland 246w

Urban development grants 15w, 24-5w, 169w
Cumbria 169w

Urban housing renewal unit 116w

Urban planning
Metropolitan counties 221-2w

Urban programme
Chinese community 167-8w
Cumbria 168-70w
Ethnic minorities 166w
Inner city areas (07.11.85) 211-8
Public expenditure 682-3, 684

Urban programme assistance scheme
Statistics 116w

Urban transport
West Midlands 264w

USA
Armed forces casualties 93w
Communication 83w
Company taxation 124w
Defence contracts 194w
Electronic equipment 41-2w
Export controls 233w
High technology 233w
Technology transfer 194w
UK companies abroad 101w
UNESCO 183w

USSR
European Security Conference 235w
Human rights 235w
Political prisoners 234w, 236w, 298w, 299w

Vacancies
Dundee 253-4w
Youth training scheme 133w

VAT
British Legion poppies 270w
Companies 195w
Human organs 66-7w, 316w
Portugal 192w
Tax yields 124-5w

Veterinary services
Lasswade 197-8w

Video equipment
Taxation 44w

Voluntary organisations
Aftercare hostel grant scheme 239w
Development aid 34w
Overseas aid 296-7w
Youth training scheme 229-30w

Voting rights
Business 243w
Local government elections 243w

Waddington, Mr David, *Minister of State for the Home Department*
Questions
Adoption of foreign children 236w
British citizenship, Legislation 243w
Chinese community, Local government staff 29-30w
Commission for Racial Equality 33w
Commission for Racial Equality, Complaints 33w
Commission for Racial Equality, Costs 33w
Commission for Racial Equality, Manpower 32-3w
Data Protection Registrar, Civil service manpower 241-2w
Data Protection Registrar, Civil service manpower 325w
Data Protection Registrar, Costs 241w
Data Protection Registrar, Departmental forms 240-1w
Data Protection Registrar, Disclosure of information 241w
Data Protection Registrar, Disclosure of information 324-5w
Data Protection Registrar, Home computers 244w, 325w
Data Protection Registrar, Management techniques 242w
Data Protection Registrar, Publicity 325w
Data Protection Registrar, Telephone systems 325-6w
Deportation, Stateless persons 320w
Flather, Shreela, Commission for Racial Equality 33-4w
Government grants to local authorities 29w
Home Office Immigration & Nationality Department, Civil service manpower 319w
Immigrants, Bangladesh 179w
Immigration appeals, Administrative delays 179w
Immigration controls 239-40w
Immigration controls, Members 31-2w
Immigration rules, Members 121w
Immigration rules, Refugees 319w
Pavitt, Laurie, Immigration controls 31-2w
Temporary immigrants, Bangladesh 179w
Temporary immigrants, Repatriation 178w
Travel documents 319-20w
Work permits, Theodorou, Marina 326w

Wages councils
Greater London 179w
Minimum wage 301w

Wainwright, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 450

Waldegrave, Mr William, *Ministry of State for the Environment (Countryside & Local Government)*
Questions
Development Commission, Government grants 25w
Institute of Zoology 169-70w
Local government expenditure, Local Government Act 1972 310w
Noise control, Legislation 309w
"Obtaining Better Value from Further Education" 24w

Wales
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 215w
Coastal areas 127w
Commission for Racial Equality 33-4w
Day care of children 211-2w
Drinking & driving 30w
European Regional Development Fund 38w
Geriatric patients 215w
Geriatrics 212-6w
Health service staff 210-2w
Higher education 11-2w
Local government staff 39w
Magistrates 291-3w
Manufacturing industries 211-2w
Music therapy 210w
Nature reserves 127w
NHS 38-40w
Paramedical staff 210-2w
Planning appeals 293-4w
Planning permission 293-4w
Regional aid 38w
Service industries 211-2w
Unemployment 37w

Wales Advisory Board for Local Authority Higher Education 11-2w

Walker, Mr Bill
Questions
Civil defence, Prestwick Airport 548
Teachers, Scotland 558

Wall, Sir Patrick
Questions
Overseas aid 297w
Overseas aid, Private sector 296-7w

Wallace, Mr James
Questions
Environmental impact assessment, Dounreay 146w
Farm capital grants scheme, Scotland 555-6
Island councils, Local government expenditure 146w
Island councils, Rate support grants 146w
Severe weather payments 154w

Wallace, Colin 247w
Inquiries 247w

Wallenberg, Raoul 143w, 145w, 234w, 236w, 298w, 299w
Death 145w
EC action 236w

Waller, Mr Gary
Debates etc
Road safety (15.11.85) 806, 824
Questions
A629, Road construction 74w
Department of Transport, Cash limits 83w
Food colourings 164w
War casualties, Korea 307w

Walters, Mr Dennis
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08.11.85) 263-5

Waltham Forest Health Authority 200w

Wandsworth
St James Hospital 153w
Unemployment 49w

Wandsworth Prison 319-20w, 320-1w, 321-2w
Building repairs 321w
Catering 321w
Construction costs 321w
Prison employment 320-1w
Prison staff 321-2w
Prisoners clothing 319-20w
Prisoners exercise 321w
Sanitation 319-20w

War Cabinet 27-8w
Disclosure of information 27-8w
Falkland Islands 27-8w

War casualties
Korea 307w
Monuments 307w

War pensioners mobility supplements 262w, 281w

War pensions
Orange badge scheme 262w, 281w

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Questions
Business statement 117

Wareing, Robert N
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 30
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 622
Questions
Air safety, Aircraft seats 82w
Air safety, Safety measures 82w
Board & lodging charges, Orders & regulations 94w
British Telecom, Price increases 45w
Crop spraying, Urban areas 56-7w
East Timor, Indonesia 60w
Gas tariffs, Price increases 296w
Handicapped, Concessionary fares 82w
Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, Mergers 45w
Night clubs, Licensing 33w
Open University, Government grants 49w

Warnock Committee see In Vitro Fertilisation Departmental Committee

Warrant sales 172w
Scotland 172w

Warren, Mr Kenneth
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 494-7, 524
Questions
Army, Protective clothing 257w
Military aircraft, Airlines 307w

Wars
Legislation 48w

Washington Post 99-101w

Waste disposal
Air pollution 551
Greater London 221w
Local government reform 20w
Polkemmet 551

Wastes
Recycling 165-6w

Water pollution
Nitrates 166w

Watts, Mr John
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 457
Questions
Urban programme Assistance Scheme, Statistics 116w

Weather
Agricultural production 189w

Weetch, Mr Ken
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 128, 173-6
Questions
Insolvency, East Anglia 42-3w

Wells, Mr Bowen
Questions
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Privatisation 46w

Welsh language
Commission for Racial Equality 32-3w
Language education 209w
Local authorities 38w

Welsh Office
Amey Roadstone 37w

Welwyn & Hatfield District Council 120-1w
Civil defence 120-1w

West Glamorgan Health Authority (14.11.85) 779-86

West India House 310w

West Lothian Hospital 251w
Construction 251w

West Midlands 296
Travel Concessions 296
Urban transport 264w

West Midlands County Council 264w, 310w

West Midlands light rapid transit system 264w

West Midlands Residuary Body 218-9w
Public appointments 218-9w

West Yorkshire
Public transport 81-2w

West Yorkshire Residuary Body 219w
Public appointments 219w

Western Education & Library Board 95w

Western Health & Social Services Board
Health services finances 669

Western Isles Integrated Development Programme 186w

Wheat
Imports 164w

Wheeler, Mr John
Questions
Diplomatic immunity, Parking offences 299-301w
Flats Management Committee of Inquiry 220w

Whisky
Profits 192w

Whitley Council 279w

Whitney, Mr Ray *Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security*
Debates etc
South Trafford Health Authority (11.11.85) 403-6
Questions
Ambulance services, Pay settlements 159-60w
Children in care, Adoption 279w
Community hospitals 421
Cruelty to children 156w
Dangerous mental patients, Special hospitals 287w
District health authorities, East Anglia 412
Drug advisory committees 148w
Dunston Hill Hospital, Fire prevention 199w
EC Poverty programme 202-6w
Elderly, Personal social services 147w
Electorate 282-4w
Geriatrics, Gateshead Health Authority 199w
Home helps 157w
Hospital waiting lists, East Anglia 412
Hospital waiting lists, Greater London 148-9w
Hospital waiting lists, Manchester 283w
Hospital waiting lists, Peterborough 412
Hospitals 202w
Hospitals, Armed forces casualties 93w
Hospitals, Civil defence 93w
Hospitals, Construction 201w, 285-6w
Hospitals, Fire prevention 156w
Hospitals, NHS finance 421
Hospitals, North West region 201w
Hospitals, Patients 279w
Hospitals, Radio 281w
Kidneys, Transplant surgery 158-9w
Liver diseases, Death 200-2w
Liver diseases, Transplant surgery 200-2w
Medical treatments, Greater London 286w
Mental health community care 284w
Music therapy 156w
NHS, Hospital beds 92w
Orthopaedics, Hospital waiting lists 89-91w
Psychogeriatrics, Hampshire 334w
Skinal Bandits 200w
Speech impaired, Aids for handicapped 86w
St James Hospital, Wandsworth 153w
St Marys Hospital, Hampton 421
Tonocara canis, Children 334w
Trent Regional Health Authority, Capital investment 199-200w

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Wales 215w
Commission for Racial Equality 33w
Commission for Racial Equality, Complaints 33w
Commission for Racial Equality, Costs 33w
Commission for Racial Equality, Manpower 32-3w
Flather, Shreela, Commission for Racial Equality 33-4w
Handicapped workers, Manpower 180w
Joseph, Keith, Dismissal 100w
Local authorities, Personal social services 152w
Local authorities, Welsh language 38w
Magistrates, Wales 291-3w
Music therapy 156w
Music therapy, Wales 210w
Nature reserves, Wales 127w
Planning appeals, Wales 293-4w
Welsh language, Languages education 209w

Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 220w

Wilkinson, Mr John
Debates etc
Czechoslovakia, Compensation (13.11.85) 664-5

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Debates etc
Singleton Hospital, Casualty unit (14.11.85) 779-82

Winnick, Mr David
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 634-6
Queen's speech, Industry & employment (12.11.85) 477
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 673-4
Council housing, Housing standards 15w
Immigration controls, Members 31-2w

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Questions
Contraceptives, Family doctors 281w
Pelvic diseases, Medical research 288-90w
Pharmacists, Hospitals 202w, 282w
Sunday trading 683-4

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Matthew Brown, Monopolies & Mergers Commission reports (13.11.85) 571-2
Questions
Hospitals 202w
Hospitals, Construction 201w
Hospitals, North West region 201w
Housing starts 170w
School buildings, Construction 173-4w

Wolfson, Mr Mark
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 58-61

Women
Part-time employment 64w

Womens employment
Scotland 64w
State earnings related pension scheme 418

Woodall, Mr Alec
Debates etc
Arts Council grants (14.11.85) 705-6
Darfield Main colliery (12.11.85) 540, 542

Woodcock, Mr Mike
Debates etc
Queen's speech (06.11.85) 93-4

Woolwich ferry 80w, 261w
Local government finance 261w
Local government reform 261w

Work permits
Theodorou, Marina 326w

Working Party on Pesticide Residues 163w

Working Party on Pesticide Residues Report, 1977/81 163w

World Cup 681
Northern Ireland 681

Wormwood Scrubs 322-3w
Prison accommodation 322-3w
Prison employment 322w
Prisoners clothing 322-3w
Prisoners exercise 323w

Wrigglesworth, Mr Ian
Debates etc
Autumn statement (12.11.85) 439
Employment schemes (12.11.85) 453
Questions
Computers in schools, Finance 295w
Gas safety, Elderly 225-6w
Information technology centres, Government grants 224w

Yeo, Mr Tim
Debates etc
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13.11.85) 596, 598, 600
Questions
Housing benefits, Social security claims 159w
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 418
Rural areas 119-20w

Yorkshire Water Authority Bill 1984/85
Money res (13.11.85) 545

Young, Sir George, *Under-Secretary of State for the Environment*
Debates etc
Urban programme (07.11.85) 214-8
Questions
Amey Roadstone, Dept of the Environment 17w
Brixton Young Families Housing Aid Association 120w
Charitable trusts, Greater London 25w
Control orders, Housing Act 1964 308w
Council house sales, Great Grimsby 118w
Council housing, Great Grimsby 117w
"Home Improvement Consultation Paper" 308w
Homelessness, Brent 16w
House purchase assistance scheme 117w
Housing capital allocations, Brent 16w
Housing Corporation, Brent 15-6w
Housing investment programme, Great Grimsby 219-20w
Housing investment programme, Portsmouth 309w
Housing policy, "Home Improvement Consultation Paper" 116w
Housing starts 170w
Housing starts, Portsmouth 309w
Housing stock, Great Grimsby 118w
Isle of Dogs Enterprise Zone, Canary Wharf 23w
Local government reform, Local government property 22w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Compulsory purchase 308w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Employment 309w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Expenditure 309w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Property transfer 309-10w
Owner occupied housing, Subsidies 15w
Private sector housing, Flats 215-6w
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, Conferences 221w
Rehousing, London boroughs 19-20w
Urban development grants 15w, 24-5w
Urban housing renewal unit 116w
Urban programme, Chinese community 167-8w
Urban programme, Cumbria 168-70w
Urban programme, Ethnic minorities 166w

Urban programme assistance scheme, Statistics 116w

Young offenders
Education 121w
Remand centres 239w

Young people
Contraception 336w
Contraceptives 150w, 414-5
Drug abuse 65w
Family planning clinics 336w
Pelvic diseases 288-90w
Youth training scheme 302-4w

***Younger, Rt Hon George**, Secretary of State for Scotland*
Debates etc
Housing (Scotland) Bill, 1R (14.11.85) 711
Lothian Region (Edinburgh Western Relief Road) Order Confirmation Bill 1985/86, 1R (11.11.85) 295
Peterhead Harbours (South Bay Development) Order Confirmation Bill 1985/86, 1R (11.11.85) 295
Queen's speech, Home Office (07.11.85) 204-10
Questions
Agency nurses, Costs 251w
Agricultural advisory services, Scotland 254-6w
Agriculture, Scotland 184-5w, 189w
Amphetamines, Scotland 65w
Average earnings, Scotland 65w
A68, Road construction 60w
Civil defence, Crosshouse Hospital 547-8
Civil defence, Prestwick Airport 548
Drug abuse, Scotland 63w, 65w
Employment opportunities, Scotland 550
Higher education, Scotland 312w
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 550
List D schools, Scotland 252w
Local government staff, Scotland 66w
Manufacturing industries, Scotland 63w, 66w
Public expenditure, Scotland 550-1
Rates & rating, Scotland 187w
Salmon, Scotland 1w
Scottish Office, Cash limits 66w
Scottish Trades Union Congress, Economic situation 549-50
Scottish Urban Programme, Dundee 550
Service industries, Scotland 64w
Teachers, Pay 553-4
Teachers, Scotland 551-3, 554
Western Isles Integrated Development Programme 186w
Womens employment, Scotland 64w
Youth training scheme, Scotland 313-4w

Youth custody
Education 110w, 121w
Prisons 239w

Youth employment
Board & lodging charges 420
School leaving 302-4w

Youth training scheme 133-4w, 190w
Accidents 134-6w, 137-8w
Age 133w
Conditions of employment 134w
Death 134-6w, 137-8w
Ethnic groups 133w
Greater Manchester 230w
Handicapped workers 190w
Local government reform 230w
Northern Ireland 93-4w
Scotland 313-4w
Training 133w
Vacancies 133w
Voluntary organisations 229-30w
Young people 302-4w

Youth unemployment
Drug abuse 683
Dundee 252-3w, 254w
Northern region 684
Portsmouth 302w

Zoological Society of London 169-70w